



Football
Sport Manual
2026-27 Edition

4.7 Football

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4.7.1 Regular Season Procedures

4.7.1.1 Rules of Competition

4.7.1.1.1 Playing Rules. NFHS Football Rules, as modified by the FHSAA, are the official playing rules for all football games. The following modifications to those rules have been adopted by the Board of Directors.

- 1-1-4 Note. Size of Officials Crew: Five (5) field officials and one clock operator will be used for all varsity football games. State Series contests will consist of seven (7) field officials and one clock operator. FHSAA State Championship contests may consist of seven (7) field officials, a field alternate, and two clock operators.
- 1-2-3g Note. Team Boxes will be 25 to 25.
- 1-3-1g Note. Size of Ball: A smaller ball may be used for eighth grade games and below.
- 1-3-2 Note. Official Ball: The FHSAA has adopted a specific ball for use in the FHSAA State Football Series as posted on the FHSAA Website.
- 1-3-7. Supplemental Equipment: Supplementary equipment to aid in game administration may be used (e.g., 25/40-second clock, referee microphone).
- 1-3-7, 3-6-1. Play Clock: If a visible 25/40-second clock is used it shall be operated by a registered official.
- 1-3-7. Wireless Microphone: Use of a “wireless microphone” by the referee is permitted as follows: (a) The head coach of both teams must agree to the referee’s use of the system prior to the start of the game; (b) Only the type foul and the distance penalty may be announced by the referee; (c) A player’s name, position or number may never be announced; and (d) The information is not announced until after the captain has made his decision to accept or decline the penalty.
- Table 1-7. Written Authorization: The specified written authorization must be according to NFHS Football Rules.
- Table 1-7. Note 8. Hearing Impaired Players: Teams with hearing impaired player(s) may use a drum to establish cadence following the ready-for-play signal.
- 1-8 State Association Accommodations. Artificial Limbs: The use of artificial limbs is authorized on an individual player basis. The school must provide the referee with written approval from the FHSAA Office.
- Table 3-1. Halftime: Halftime will be 20 minutes (includes all halftime activities and three-minute warm-up). Clock operators will set the halftime clock at 17 minutes and will not start the clock until signaled by the referee after all team personnel have vacated the field. Once the 17 minutes have expired, an additional three minutes will be placed on the clock for the mandatory warm-up period.
- 3-1-1 Note. Overtime: The overtime procedure listed in the NFHS Rules Book is adopted for all contests in both the regular season and the Florida High School State Championship Series. The FHSAA Office may waive the use of the overtime procedure in jamborees or preseason classics upon request of the host school principal, provided the request is based on the unanimous desire of all participating schools.
- 3-1-2. Mercy Rule: If one team is ahead by a margin of 35 points or more at the end of the second quarter, the clock shall run continuously. Once the running clock is initiated, it shall run continuously with the exception of during any timeout taken by a team or officials, injuries, unsporting conduct penalties and during the period between quarters.
- 3-1-5 Note. Length of Quarters: Games involving a mixture of players in grades 7, 8 and 9 will be played in 10-minute quarters.
- 3-2-1. Coin Toss: If the coin toss, or simulated coin toss, is held on the playing field, it must be held three minutes prior to the scheduled game starting time.
- 3-5-7g. Mandatory Water Breaks: The referee must call an uncharged one-minute timeout at the first clock stoppage after the 6:30 minute mark of each quarter. If the first clock stoppage is a timeout request by either team, then that timeout is granted and the next clock stoppage that is not a requested team timeout becomes the water break. Coaches may meet with their players during this timeout. This rule must be enforced in all games up to and including the regular season and playoffs, including both fall and spring preseason classics and jamborees.



- 3-5-7k. TV Timeouts: TV timeouts may be authorized by the host school principal for regular season games. The FHSAA Office may authorize TV timeouts for contests in the Florida High School State Championship Series as specified elsewhere in these regulations.

4.7.1.1.2 Schedules. Each member school may sign eleven (11) two-year contracts to include preseason and regular season games.

4.7.1.1.3 Cancellations or Rescheduled Games. Every district game shall be played and completed by week 10 of the season. This shall be accomplished even if it requires the rescheduling or cancellation of non-district games. It, therefore, is important that all district games cancelled due to inclement weather be made up not later than Monday of Week 18. The FHSAA office is committed to protecting the integrity of the Florida High School State Championship Series. Schools do not have the option to cancel a district game by agreement unless forfeiture is involved.

4.7.1.1.4 Forfeitures. Each contracted regular season game shall be played, to its conclusion, as scheduled. The forfeiting team shall become ineligible to participate in the Florida High School State Championship Series that season or a future season and may also face financial penalties. Should this occur, all district games played by the school shall be considered non-district games, shall not count in the district standings, and shall be removed from the football district for the remainder of the classification cycle.

4.7.1.1.5 Healthcare Personnel. Each host member school shall have a healthcare provider present and readily available for each game, as required in Policy 43.5.

4.7.1.1.6 Pregame Warm-ups. A school's team shall warm up in an area between the end line and the 45-yard line on the side of the field to which it is assigned for pregame warm-ups by the host school management. Enforcement of this policy shall be the responsibility of the host school management until the jurisdiction of the game officials begins. A violation of this policy shall be considered an act of unsporting conduct and shall be penalized pursuant to NFHS Rules.

4.7.1.2 Postseason Bowl Games.

4.7.1.2.1 A team that does not participate in the Florida High School State Championship Series or participates in but does not qualify for the Florida High School State Championship Series as a representative of its district may compete in a postseason bowl game exclusively on Wednesday, Thursday or Saturday of the 2 weeks following the completion of the regular season, provided the school meets the requirements stated herein.

4.7.1.2.2 A school that qualifies for the Florida High School State Championship Series may not agree to play in a postseason bowl game.

4.7.1.2.3 A postseason bowl game hosted by a senior high school must have the approval of the FHSAA Office. Such games, however, cannot be approved by the FHSAA Office until the Monday of the last week of the regular season or thereafter. An **AT2 Form** must be completed to sanction the event.

4.7.1.2.4 To be eligible to compete in a postseason bowl game, a school must have played a representative schedule and must have a winning record (.500 or better).

4.7.1.2.5 All NFHS Football Rules shall apply to postseason bowl games.

4.7.1.3 Spring Practice, Jamborees and Classics.

4.7.1.3.1 Spring Practice. See Policies 6.1.1.2 and 18.2.

4.7.1.3.2 Spring Jamborees and Classics. Schools are limited to either one (1) Jamboree or one (1) Classic following the procedures in 4.7.2.2 and counts as one of 20 sessions outlined in Policy 6.1.1.2. Spring Jamborees and Classics may not be played outside the state of Florida.

4.7.2 Florida High School State Championship Series Procedures

4.7.2.1 District Scheduling Meeting

4.7.2.1.2 Date. Coincides with the reclassification cycle (once classifications and districting are final.)

4.7.2.1.2 Scheduling Meeting.

- A representative of each school assigned to the district must be in attendance
- A district football schedule for both years of the cycle must be completed during this meeting



- Schools shall schedule district football games according to the following schedule: 10th week, 8th week, 6th week, 4th week, 9th week, 7th week, 5th week, 3rd week, 2nd week and 1st week. District games shall not be scheduled on the 11th week.
- A complete schedule, including any non-district games, must be submitted via Home Campus by the first Monday of June.

4.7.2.1.3 District Standings. The FHSAA Office shall compute on a weekly basis the official standings for each district in each classification based on the game reports filed by member schools as required in Policy 4.1.5.2. Official standings will be posted on FHSAA.com. It will be on the basis of these standings only that district champions will be determined. It is imperative that member schools report their game scores via the MaxPreps website each week in accordance with Policy 4.1.5.2. It is strongly encouraged that member schools identify an official scorer for all regular season games to send results to MaxPreps. In the event a member school wishes to challenge its win-loss record as recorded in the official FHSAA standings, the burden of proof will be upon the member school.

4.7.2.1.3.1 Only those games played with other schools in a district shall count toward the district standings. If a school plays more than one varsity game with another school in its district, then only the first game will count in the district standings.

4.7.2.1.3.2 Breaking Ties.

- If two schools are tied for first place in the final district standings, the winner of the regular season game between the two schools shall advance to the regional tournament as the district champion.
- If three schools are tied for first place in the final district standings and one of the three schools defeated the other two in regular season competition, then that school shall advance to the regional tournament as the district champion.
- If three or more schools are tied for first place in the final district standings and the tie cannot be broken based on the results of regular season competition, then a district tiebreaker shall be based on the MaxPreps Rankings throughout the entire regular season to include week 11 games.

4.7.2.2 Tournament Structure and Time Schedules

4.7.2.2.1 Open Division, Regional Tournaments, and Football Independent Series

4.7.2.2.1.1 Open Division

- The top eight (8) teams from the MaxPreps Rankings at the conclusion of the regular season will be pulled to compete in the Open Division Championship Tournament. All other schools will qualify for regional tournaments based on the criteria listed in FHSAA Administrative Procedure 3.3.1.
- Open Division Complexes.** See Administrative Procedure 3.3.1.1.3.3.

4.7.2.2.1.2 Classes 1A-6A

- Playoff field will be made up of 32 teams in each class.
- 8 Qualifiers in each region. 4 District champions and 4 at-large qualifiers. Teams will be seeded 1-8 based on the final MaxPreps Rankings.
- Higher seed will always host the regional tournament except during the regional quarterfinal round where a district champion is facing an at-large team, the district champion is designated as the host regardless of seeding. Determination of a host school using these criteria is not absolute. In all cases, the FHSAA Office reserves the right to select an alternate site.

4.7.2.2.1.3 Rural

The sixteen (16) top ranked schools will be placed in a bracket.

4.7.2.2.1.4 Florida Invitational Tournament (FIT) 1 and 2

- Classes 1A-6A.** For the Florida Invitational Tournament (FIT) bracket, the number of play-in games will be determined by the number of schools in the FIT division to create a traditional twelve (12) team bracket. The higher seed will always host in the regional tournament.
- Rural.** The remaining schools will be placed in the Florida Invitational Tournament (FIT) bracket. For the FIT bracket, the number of play-in games will be determined by the number of schools in the FIT division to create a traditional twelve (12) team bracket.

4.7.2.2.1.5 Football Independent Series

- The FHSAA Independent Series will consist of two divisions, currently referred to as Division A and Division B
- Each division is organized into North and South regions



- (1) Eight (8) teams from each region will qualify for the postseason (16 total in each division), determined by the MaxPreps Rankings
- (2) The winners of the North and South regions in each division shall advance to the Florida Independent Series Championship games at a neutral site
- (c) FHSAA Independent Series schools that don't qualify for the post season are eligible to participate in one bowl game

4.7.2.2.2 State Semifinals

- (a) **Dates and Times.** See the football webpage at FHSAA.com.
- (b) **Bracketing.** Teams will be seeded based on the MaxPreps Rankings at the conclusion of the Regional rounds. The one (1) seed will play the four (4) seed and the two (2) seed will play the three (3) seed.
- (c) **Host Schools.** Teams with the highest regular season MaxPreps Ranking after the Regional rounds will be designated "home" team.

4.7.2.2.3 Florida High School State Championship Finals

- (a) **Dates and Time Schedule.** See the football webpage at FHSAA.com.
- (b) **Home Team.** Teams with the highest regular season MaxPreps Ranking after the Regional rounds will be designated "home" team.
- (c) **Jerseys.** Schools must bring both their white and dark sets of jerseys to avoid conflicts.

4.7.2.2.4 Advancement of Winners

- (a) **Regional to State Semifinals.** The champion from each of the four regional tournaments in each classification shall advance to the state semifinal games in the respective classifications.
- (b) **State Semifinals to Florida High School State Championship Series.** The winners of the two semifinal games in each classification shall advance to the Florida High School State Championship Series in the respective classifications.

4.7.2.3 Tournament Regulations

4.7.2.3.1 Squads

- (a) **Player Limit.** Teams shall be allowed a maximum of 75 players in uniform for each game. Uniformed players, coaches and team managers of participating schools will be admitted to games in the Florida High School State Championship Series in which they participate free of charge.
- (b) **Florida High School State Championship Series.** The number of field credentials for participating teams shall not exceed the number of uniformed players plus 25 to be used by coaches, managers, statisticians, trainers, medical personnel, etc.

4.7.2.3.2 Exchange of Game Tapes. The head coaches of opposing teams in each Florida High School State Championship Series game must exchange videotapes of their previous two (2) games by 5 p.m. EST on the Saturday (Monday for first-round games) immediately preceding their game. A minimum monetary penalty of \$250 and/or other sanctions shall be assessed for willful violations of this provision.

4.7.2.3.3 Pregame Warm-up and Procedures. The following pregame time schedule is recommended for all Florida High School State Championship Series games:

- 6 p.m. – Playing surface open to kickers and punters; gates open to spectators.
- 6:30 p.m. (60:00 on pregame clock) – Clock operator starts pregame countdown on game clock
- 7:10 p.m. (20:00 on pregame clock) – Pregame warm-up period ends; teams leave field.
- 7:12 p.m. (18:00 on pregame clock) – Announcer reads pregame script, sportsmanship message and starting lineups (both offensive and defensive) for both teams; this is not formal introductions of starting lineups and it is not necessary for players and coaches to be on the field when this occurs.
- 7:23 p.m. (7:00 on pregame clock) – Visiting team emerges from dressing room, takes the field and reports to its sideline area.
- 7:24 p.m. (6:00 on pregame clock) – Home team emerges from dressing room, takes the field and reports to its sideline area.
- 7:25 p.m. (5:00 on pregame clock) – National Anthem is performed.
- 7:27 p.m. (3:00 on pregame clock) – Coin toss at mid-field.
- 7:29:30 p.m. (0:30 on pregame clock) – Teams take positions on field for kickoff.
- 7:30 p.m. (0:00 on pregame clock) – Reset game clock to 12:00. Referee signals ready for play. KICKOFF.

No participating team, other than the host school's team, shall be permitted onto a playoff field for practice during the week of the Florida High School State Championship Series game. Teams that advance to the Florida High School



State Championship Series shall not be allowed practice time on the Florida High School State Championship Series facility field other than the pregame warm-up.

4.7.2.3.4 Bands.

- (a) Admittance. Band and drill team members from participating schools in full dress uniform, along with their adult sponsors will receive complimentary admission to all games in the Florida High School State Championship Series. One adult chaperon for every 10 participating students shall receive complimentary admission.
- (b) National Anthem. The host school shall be responsible for arranging for a live performance of the National Anthem. This live performance may be by the host school’s band, singer(s) or instrumental solo or ensemble; or, if by mutual agreement of both schools, by the visiting team’s band or by both bands.
- (c) Halftime Performance. The marching band of each participating school may perform at halftime of the game in which their team is involved. Each band shall be allotted a maximum of eight (8) minutes and 30 seconds for its halftime performance. The band representing the visiting team shall perform first, and must be ready to take the field and begin its performance immediately upon conclusion of the first half. The band representing the home team shall perform second and must be clear of the field before the expiration of the 20-minute halftime period. Should only one band perform at halftime, there will be no time limit except that the band must be clear of the field with three (3) minutes remaining in the halftime period.

4.7.2.3.5 Cheerleaders. Cheerleaders in uniform, along with their adult sponsors, will be admitted free of charge to Florida High School State Championship Series contests in which their school’s team participates. The number of cheerleaders permitted will be the same as the number who cheered during varsity contests during the regular season.

4.7.3 Football Contact Procedure

The purpose of this procedure is player safety. This procedure is intended to limit live action drills and simulations and not the number of practices a team may participate in full pads. A team may participate in “AIR,” “BAGS,” AND “THUD” during any point after the acclimatization period.

4.7.3.1 Definitions

- (a) AIR - Players run a drill unopposed without contact
- (b) BAGS - Players run a drill against a bag or another soft-contact surface
- (c) THUD - contact above the waist only, after initial contact each player takes his first two or three steps, then both relax and nobody goes to the ground. There is no winner or loser. Coaches are not grading physical domination in “thud.” Teammates are merely trying to give each other a simulation of game action. Thud is not “live contact” format. “Thud” is an alternative to “Live Contact.”
- (d) LIVE CONTACT - Players run a drill in game-like conditions and is the only time that players are taken to the ground
- (e) HELMETS - Helmet, shirt/practice jersey, shorts- NO SHOULDER PADS OR LEG PADS
- (f) SHELLS - Helmet, Shoulder pad, Thigh pad, shorts
- (g) FULL- Helmet, Shoulder pads, pants with all pads
- (h) PRESEASON - Day 1 through the Monday of the first regular season game
- (i) FALL AND SPRING ACCLIMATIZATION - During the initial five (5) days, the use of arm shields, tackling and blocking dummies, sleds and other devices can be used for instructional purposes, however, deliberate body-to-body contact is prohibited.

Day 1	Helmets	Air/Bags	3 hour max	Walk thru permitted with minimum 3 hour rest in between
Day 2	Helmets	Air/Bags	3 hour max	Walk thru permitted with minimum 3 hour rest in between
Day 3	Shells	Air/Bags	3 hour max	Walk thru permitted with minimum 3 hour rest in between
Day 4	Shells	Air/Bags	3 hour max	Walk thru permitted with minimum 3 hour rest in between
Day 5	Shells	Air/Bags	3 hour max	Walk thru permitted with minimum 3 hour rest in between

4.7.3.2 Preseason-Spring Practice. Day 6 through the Monday of the First Regular Season game or end of spring practice:

- (a) Live Contact shall be allowed in no more than 2 consecutive practice days
- (b) LIVE CONTACT IS LIMITED TO 40 MIUNTES EACH DAY DURING THE PRESEASON
- (c) Air/Bags/Thud unlimited



4.7.3.3 Regular Season and Post Season

- (a) Live contact during practice shall be allowed in no more than three (3) practice days per week;
- (b) Live contact during practice shall not be allowed on more than two (2) consecutive days;
- (c) Live contact during practice shall be limited to not more than 30 minutes per day;
- (d) Live contact during practice shall be limited to not more than 80 minutes per week.
- (e) Unlimited Air/Bags/Thud

4.7.3.4 Written Practice Plans. A written practice plan in compliance with this Administrative Procedure shall be prepared in advance by the head coach prior to every practice and maintained by the school for a period of at least twelve (12) months. Such practice plans shall be made available upon request.

4.7.4 Football Rankings

4.7.4.1 FHSAA Ranking – Qualifying Criteria

- (a) In order to be considered as a “Playoff” qualifier, a school must play a minimum of eight regular-season games. (An exception may be made by the Executive Director of FHSAA for schools that do not play a full schedule of games.)
- (b) Results of all regular season games played and finished will count towards a team’s **MaxPreps Ranking**.
- (c) Only regular season games of out-of-state teams will be used to calculate the **MaxPreps Ranking**.

4.7.4.1.1 Forfeited, Postponed and Interrupted Regular Season and State Series

Game Procedures

- (a) Schools that are required to forfeit a game or games by the FHSAA, the game or games shall count as one of the permissible contests under the 10 contest limitations for football. The school shall receive forfeit losses for those scheduled contests and shall be reflected as losses in their final schedule.
- (b) When a school’s varsity team is unable to complete the season, those remaining teams on that school’s regular season schedule shall receive forfeit wins for those scheduled contests.
- (c) Postponed or interrupted contests due to weather or other circumstances
 - First priority shall be given to player safety
 - The host team along with the officials have the sole responsibility of determining if the field is fit for play

(1) Postponed contest:

Postponed games are games that are postponed before they actually begin.

- The host school shall notify the opposing team and the officials as early as possible when a contest is postponed.
- The host school along with the visiting school is responsible for determining whether an event is to be postponed.
- Postponed contests must be played on the next day unless a makeup play date is agreed upon in the signed contract or both schools agree on a mutual later play date. The failure of a team to play the next day, on the agreed upon play date in the contract or on the mutual agreed later play date would result in a forfeit for the team who fails to come to an agreement of a makeup date.
- After administrators agree on the rescheduled play date of the postponed contest, the host school must notify the FHSAA office, Home Campus, and MaxPreps by 9:00am the following morning of the cancelled contest via email at emailfootball@fhsaa.org with all of the updated play date information.
- All games on a team’s regular season schedule must be played before Tuesday of week 11 on the football calendar. If makeup games aren’t completed by this date they will be removed from both team’s schedules and go down as a “no game.”
- All District games must be rescheduled and played.
- All region, state semifinal and championship games must be rescheduled and played.
- Where no agreement can be made between the two schools the FHSAA Executive Director or his designee reserves the right to mediate.

(2) Interrupted contest:

If a game is interrupted PRIOR to the completion the following options exist-



- A. Mutually agree to terminate game with score as it exists if mutually agreed by all parties; All parties include the Head Football Coach from each team, administrator on duty of home and visiting team.
 - B. Mutually agree to resume the game at the point of interruption the next day or a specific mutually agreed upon date and time. This decision shall be finalized at the site prior to team departure and communicated to FHSAA via Home Campus, MaxPreps, and email at emailfootball@fhsaa.org immediately. (There will be no “let’s talk next week and decide”)
 - The final score must be reported via MaxPreps by 9:00am the following day of the completed game.
 - If neither (A) or (B) are agreed to, the teams shall resume the game on the following calendar day, unless there exists published, written Board of Education policies or FHSAA policies that prohibit such play, in which case it shall be played the following day. If one school fails to abide by this procedure and there has not been a mutual agreement to (A) or (B) the game shall be declared a forfeiture by the team who fails to meet the agreement as determined by the Executive Director.
 - All interrupted games must be completed by Tuesday of week 11 on the football calendar.
 - All District games must be finished from the point it was interrupted unless all parties agree the game is final.
 - Where no agreement can be made between the two schools, the FHSAA Executive Director or his designee reserves the right to mediate.
- (3) **Cumulative Delay Time period:**
- There will be a two hour cumulative delay deadline for each regular season football contest.
 - The two hour cumulative delay period will begin as soon as the officials and/or administrators interrupt the game.
 - When the two hour cumulative delay time period is up each school must go to “interrupted contest” procedures.
 - If both parties agree to continue to wait past the two hour cumulative time period, that is allowable.
- (d) If a school takes its team off the playing field prior to the completion of a contest, or prior to the suspension/termination of a game by the game officials, and the contest results in a forfeit because of the refusal of the school’s team to continue play, the school shall be subject to a penalty set by the FHSAA Board of Directors. The penalty may be exclusion from participation in the district or state series of competition.

4.7.5 Team Information and Up-to-Date Statistics on MaxPreps, Media Information and Team Photo

4.7.5.1 Team Information and Up-to-Date Statistics on MaxPreps. As per Administrative Procedure 3.9.1, schools that advance to the regional round in the Florida High School State Championship Series must update team information and have up-to-date cumulative statistics on MaxPreps or the FHSAA’s designated official scores and statistics provider. The deadline for completion is no later than noon EDT the day of the game for each round participating in the Florida High School State Championship Series.

4.7.5.2 Media Information Form. As per Administrative Procedure 3.9.2, schools whose teams qualify to advance to the Florida High School State Championship Series state semifinals and/or state finals event(s) must report by noon EDT on the Monday following the team’s qualifying victory, up-to-date cumulative statistics through the end of the regional tournament and additional information by completing the “Media Information Form”.

4.7.5.3 Team Photo. As per Administrative Procedure 3.9.3, schools that advance beyond the region final in the Florida High School Football State Championship Series must send to the FHSAA Office a photograph of the team by 9 a.m. EDT on the Monday following the team’s qualifying victory. The digital team photo must be submitted via email to the provided address, and the team photo should be saved in a high-resolution PNG or JPEG format.

