

2010-2011 Football Rules and Procedures

REGULAR SEASON:

A. Football is a state championship sport in each classification, and schools are aligned on a regional basis.

1. In the reclassification year (see Article III of the GHSA Constitution), all regions will meet after reclassification has been finalized by the Executive Committee and after any sub-divisions have been finalized and cross-over games have been arranged.

(a) No schedule is valid until the plans of all regions have been approved.

(b) Plans for determining the ranking and breaking ties of the four region representatives for playoffs must be drawn.

(c) All contracts should be drawn to coincide with the two-year reclassification period and show the day, date, time, opponent and game site.

2. Each school must file its football schedule with the GHSA Executive Director no later than March 1, of each year.

(a) The schedule must show the day, date, time, opponent, and game site.

(b) The GHSA Executive Director must be notified concerning any changes made to the schedule after the submission date.

(c) Any changes made for a region game must be made prior to the date for beginning football practice.

(1) Any change of opponent after that date will cause the game not to count as a sub-region or region game.

(2) Limitations regarding schedule changes shall also be construed to prevent a school from cancelling a game when such a game could affect the region and/or sub-region standings.

(3) A change in date or time with the same opponent is not considered a change affecting region or sub-region status.

(d) Contracts with officials for varsity games must be signed by June 1 each year, and copies of the schedules must be submitted to the proper officials association(s).

(e) Each school must have a signed contract for its football scrimmage, and a school may be fined for failure to comply with that contract.

B. All GHSA football games must be played according to the rules as published by the National Federation of State High School Associations, and any other rules found in this section.

C. The number of football games allowed (excluding state playoffs) is ten (10).

1. No varsity football game may be played on a night preceding a school day without specific authorization from the GHSA Executive Director.

2. Only one football game may be played per week by the same team except in the case of the GHSA Tie-Breaker Playoff or make-up games due to special circumstances that have been approved by the Executive Director.

3. A single sub-varsity game played on a night before a school day may start no later than 6:30 p.m. The first game of two sub-varsity games played on a night before a school day may start no later than 5:30 p.m.

4. Football players playing on both the varsity and one sub-varsity team are limited to six quarters of competition in any seven (7) day period beginning with the varsity game. The penalty for violation of this rule will be forfeiture of the game in which the violation occurred and a \$1,000.00 fine.

5. The football season ends for a team or individual when that team, having completed its regular-season schedule, is eliminated from playoff competition or wins the State Championship.

6. All JV games will be played with 10-minute quarters. If there is an 8th grade student(s) on the JV team, then 8-minute quarters must be played.

D. Football practice may begin no earlier than August 1st.

1. In the first five days, at least two days must have practices with players dressed in shorts, helmets, shoulder pads, mouthpieces and shoes only. The other three days MAY include practices that have players in full pads, but no more than two consecutive days of the first five days may have full pads in use. Coaches are not required to have any practices in full pads during the first five days of practice.

2. At school workouts from the end of school in the spring until the first day of practice in the fall, players may wear no other protective football equipment except helmets and mouthpieces for all voluntary workouts and passing league games. *NOTE: Any modification of this equipment rule in summer camps requires the approval of the Executive Director.*

E. All varsity football games shall be played with a minimum of five (5) officially-dressed field officials who are registered under the GHSA plan for registering officials. The officiating crew also shall have an electric clock operator whose only duty is to operate the game clock.

1. In all games, the host school must provide some type of dressing facilities for officials at or near the game site that can also be used to hold the pregame conference.

2. During the regular season, the host school is responsible for providing a crew to work the sideline chains. These individuals must be responsible adults.

3. In accordance with By-Law 2.71-c, the host school is responsible for providing security escorts for the officials at all regular season and playoff games.

F. The following regulations are in place for GHSA football games.

1. All GHSA football games will have a twenty (20) minute halftime **unless** both school administrators agree in writing by Thursday of game week to shorten the halftime period to fifteen (15) minutes.

2. *Artificial noisemakers, except airhorns and whistles, are legal at football games. Illegal noisemakers are to be confiscated when visible and/or used.*

3. Bands are not to play during live-ball situations.

NOTE: This includes the situation in which there is no timeout and the teams are in a huddle.

(a) If, during a football game, a team claims interference with communications due to band noise, the Referee shall give a warning to one or both head coaches and the bands must cease playing.

(b) If there is a second offense by the same school's band, an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty will be imposed against that school's team.

4. During the state playoff series, a crew of six (6) field officials will be used.

5. Fans shall not be allowed to enter the playing field either before the game or at halftime to form a tunnel for players to run through.

G. Spring Football Practice for each school year may be held on ten (10) school days from February 1 until the end of the school year, spaced over 13 consecutive school days.

1. A football coach on the payroll of one school district, but under contract to another school district for the following year, may help with Spring football at the new school, if the arrangement is satisfactory with both systems

2. Students enrolled in grade 8 in a middle school or junior high school that is a feeder school to the high school may participate in Spring Practice at that high school. These students must be pre-enrolled at that member high school, and once pre-enrolled, the student has established his/her eligibility at that high school.

3. *No student (eighth grade or older) may participate in more than ten (10) days of Spring Practice.*

H. In case of a game being called in the first half (suspended game), By-Law 2.93-c must be followed.

NOTE: Football games played between schools from the same classification must be played to completion. Any interrupted game must be replayed from the point of interruption. The school that is behind in the score may choose not to continue the game. NOTE: Teams will not be allowed to play two football games in the same week, except when making up a suspended game with the permission of the Executive Director.

I. During warmups before the game and at halftime there shall be a division of the field, and neither team shall enter the other team's portion of the field. That division shall be as follows:

1. Before the game: each team shall occupy the space from their own 45-yard line to the endline of their goal line. Neither team shall occupy the area between the 45-yard lines.

EXCEPTION: When kicking, each team shall have the area between the opponent's 45-yard line and kicking team's end zone in the side zone area on the same side of the field as their bench. Kickers shall kick toward their endzone.

2. Re-entering the field before the game and at halftime: each team shall have the portion of the field between their bench and the near edge of each goal post - ie, field divided lengthwise.

J. The GHSA Overtime Procedure will be used whenever **two schools from the same classification are tied** at the end of regulation play.

1. This procedure involves giving both teams opportunities to score from the 15-yard line until the tie is broken.

2. Schools from differing classifications may use the overtime procedure if agreement is reached and communicated to the Referee **before** the beginning of the game.

3. Overtime games are exempt from the 11:30 p.m. GHSA curfew.

K. MERCY RULE: At the end of the first half of play, if a team is trailing by 30 points or more, the coach of the trailing team may choose to play the second half with a running clock. Quarters will remain at 12 minutes.

1. If the coach does not exercise the option of the running clock, the third quarter will be played with regulation timing.

2. If the point differential reaches, or remains, 30 or more points during the third quarter, the clock will still run according to rule for the remainder of the third quarter, but the fourth quarter will have a running clock mandated.

3. A running clock means the clock will be stopped only:

(a) after a touchdown and until the ball is kicked off.

(b) during deliberations for penalty administration.

(c) during charged timeouts or official's timeouts

4. A game that is reduced in time by use of a running clock shall constitute a "completed" game to meet other by-law considerations.

GHSO OVERTIME PROCEDURE

1. There will be a 3-minute intermission between the end of regulation play and the coin toss to start the overtime procedure.

2. The captains will meet for the coin toss, and the winner may choose one of the following:

(a) Be on offense first

(b) Be on defense first

(c) Choose the end of the field on which to play

3. The ball is placed on the 15-yard line and the offense keeps the ball until:

(a) The ball is turned over on downs NOTE: The team on offense can gain a first down.

(b) The defense gains possession of the ball (ball is dead immediately)

(c) The offense scores a touchdown or field goal

(d) The offense misses a field goal

4. After the first offensive team completes its possession, the opposing team gets its opportunity from the 15-yard line.

5. If the game remains tied after each team has had an offensive possession, there will be a 2-minute intermission and the team that lost the first coin toss has the first option for the second possession.

6. For each additional overtime period (i.e., an offensive possession by each team) the original coin toss options are alternated.

7. Beginning with the third overtime period, a team must attempt a 2-point try after a touchdown.

8. Each team is allowed one timeout per overtime period. No timeouts may be carried over from regulation play.

9. Penalty enforcement is handled the same way in overtime as in regulation play.

REGION PROCEDURES:

A. To qualify for championship consideration in a region or sub-region, a school must play a minimum number of games with schools in its region as determined by the region and the GHSA Reclassification Committee.

1. In any region or sub-region in which there are six (6) or less schools, if each school plays two (2) games, both games will count as region games. In any other case where two (2) schools have played more than once during the regular season, only the first game scheduled shall count in the region standings.

2. Any school playing a non-region or non sub-region schedule (i.e., not in consideration for a region championship) will not have its games count for or against any opponent.

B. The GHSA Executive Director, upon presentation of evidence to show that a school can not secure the required number of games in a region or sub-region, may authorize each school to substitute any number of games in any classification or region to qualify for championship consideration. NOTE: A request for substitution of game(s) must be submitted prior to September 1.

C. Four (4) representatives from each region will enter the post-season playoffs.

1. Each region will determine the way to designate the four representatives and their placement in the region (i.e., first place, second place, third place and fourth place).

2. In case there is a **tie between two teams** and the region does not have a different written tie-breaker plan, the following tie-breaking procedures will be used:

(a) If the teams played during the regular season, the winner of the game will have the higher placement.

(b) If the tie can not be broken with head-to-head competition, then the percentage of wins in all games with teams in the same classification in Georgia will be considered with the higher percentage team having the higher placement.

(1) Region games are added into this consideration.

(2) Wins are divided by the total number of games.

(c) If the tie remains after both "a" and "b" have been considered and both teams have qualified for a playoff spot, the region will determine the placement of the teams that are tied.

(d) If the tie remains after both "a" and "b" have been considered and there is a playoff spot for only one team, the two teams that are tied will meet in a GHSA Tie-Breaker Game.

(1) The schools shall meet at a site selected by the GHSA Executive Director for a playoff on the Monday night after the end of the regular season.

(2) The two teams will play a GHSA Tie-breaker Mini-game, and the winning team will have the higher placement.

3. In case there is a tie between three or more teams and there are spots for all the teams in the playoffs, the region shall decide the seeding of the tied teams.

4. In case there is a tie between three or more teams and there are not spots in the playoff for all three teams, the following tie-breaking procedures will be used. NOTE: At any point in this process where a tie can be broken so that only two teams remain tied, consideration of head-to-head competition will be invoked. If the tie is completely broken for all teams involved at any step in the process, the tie-breaker process is completed. EXAMPLE: Teams A, B and C are tied for the 3rd and 4th playoff positions. No team has beaten the other two in head-to-head competition. When going to winning percentage against all teams in the classification, Team A is 75 %, Team B is 67% and Team C is 60%. The tie, therefore, has been broken and there is no need to go back to any head-to-head consideration. If Teams B and C had been tied with winning percentages of 67%, then head-to-head consideration would have been used to break that tie..

(a) If the teams that are tied have played during the regular season game and one team has defeated the others, the undefeated team has the highest placement.

(b) If one team has not beaten all other tied teams, the school with the highest percentage of wins against the tied teams will have the highest placement. If the percentages leave two or more teams still tied, then revert to head-to-head records.

(c) If the tie can not be broken with head-to-head competition, then the percentage of wins in all games with teams in the same classification in Georgia (including region games) will be considered with the higher percentage team having the higher placement.

(d) If the tie remains after both steps "b" and "c" have been considered, the two teams that are tied will meet in a GHSA Tie-breaker Mini-game.

D. When a region uses a regular-season playing date for games that determine the seeding of its four playoff teams, all games in the region that night will have officials assigned separately from the regular season assignments. The Region Secretary will work with the GHSA office to coordinate this process.

GHSA TIE-BREAKER MINI-GAME PROCEDURE (NOTE: The option to play a Mini-Game to break a tie is available only to regions that have adopted the GHSA plan for breaking ties without any modifications)

1. The schools shall meet at a site selected by the GHSA Executive Director for a playoff on the Monday night after the end of the regular season.
2. The games will consist of two five-minute halves. The play begins for the first half with a free kick, and standard game rules and scoring are used.
3. There will be a two-minute intermission between the two halves. Play begins for the second half with a free kick.
4. Each team will be given two (2) timeouts in the first five (5) minutes and one timeout in the second five (5) minutes. Unused timeouts in the first five minutes may be carried over to the second five minutes.
5. If the score is tied at the end of two overtime periods, the teams will go to the GHSA 15-yard overtime procedure.
6. A coin toss will determine the order of play.
 - a. When three teams are tied for one open spot, the team winning the toss gets a bye - and then plays the winning team of the first Tie-Breaker game.

Example: Team "C" gets a bye

Team "A" plays Team "B"

Team "C" plays the winner of game 1

Winner of game 2 qualifies for the playoffs

b. When three teams are tied for two open spots, the following format will be used.

Example: Team "C" get a bye

Team "A" plays Team "B" and the winner
qualifies

Team "C" plays the loser of game 1 and
the winner qualifies

If Team "C" wins game 2, the regular
season winner between Team "C" and
the winner of game 1 will have the higher
placement

c. When four teams are tied for one open spot, the pairings will be determined by draw and the following format will be used.

Example: Team "A" plays Team "B" in game 1

Team "C" plays Team "D" in game 2

Winner of game 1 plays winner of game 2

Winner of game 3 qualifies

d. When four teams are tied for two open spots, the pairings will be determined by draws and the following format will be used.

Example: Team "A" plays Team "B" in game 1 and
the winner qualifies

Team "C" plays Team "D" in game 2 and
the winner qualifies

The winner of the regular season game between the two winning teams will
have the higher placement

7. When teams play a mini-game tiebreaker on a Monday, their first round playoff game will be scheduled for the following Saturday unless both schools agree to play on Friday.

STATE PLAYOFFS:

A. All rounds of games after the end of the regular season are considered part of the state playoff structure.

1. In all rounds but the Finals, the higher seeded team will host.

2. In all rounds except the Finals, game date and time will be set by mutual agreement. If that agreement is not possible, the GHSA Executive Director will finalize the arrangements. If an administrator does not attend the meeting at which the playoff contract is negotiated, the coach shall be authorized by the Principal to negotiate and sign a binding contract.

3. In the Quarterfinal Round, if both teams have the same seeding, a coin toss will determine the host site.

4. For Semifinal Round games:

(a) The higher seeded team will be the host team. If they do not have a stadium that meets GHSA minimum standards, they may secure a suitable site.

(b) If both teams have the same seeding, the following procedure will be used:

(1) If both sites meet or exceed GHSA standards, a coin toss will determine the host site.

(2) If only one site meets or exceeds GHSA standards, that school will host.

(3) If neither site meets or exceeds GHSA standards, the Executive Director will designate a neutral site.

(c) *The GHSA will provide ticket sellers, pass gate workers and a supervisor at all semifinal games.*

5. *Playoff ticket prices are as follows:*

First & Second Rounds: \$8.00

Third & Fourth Rounds: \$10.00

Championship Games: \$15.00 for Presale at Schools

\$20.00 for Ticketmaster and at Georgia Dome

B. All **Championship Round** games will be played December 10 and 11, in the Georgia Dome.

1. Only GHSA passes, GAOA membership cards and valid media credentials will be honored for free admission.

2. The expense and revenue shares by classification will be as follows:

AAAAA-27%, AAAA-23%, AAA-20%, AA-17%, A-13%

3. The schedule for the championship games will be:

Class AA: Friday at 4:30 p.m.

Class AAAA: Friday at 8:00 p.m.

Class A: Saturday at 1:00 p.m.

Class AAA: Saturday at 4:30 p.m.

Class AAAAA: Saturday at 8:00 p.m.

C. In order to host a playoff game beyond the third round, a school must meet the following site requirements:

1. Permanent seating requirements:

(a) One seat equals 24 inches in width. Exception: each theatre style seat (with back and arm rests) will count as one seat regardless of the width of the seat.

(b) All seats must be at least 15 feet from playing field.

(c) Total seating capacity for each class is as follows:

Class A 2,000 seats

Class AA 2,500 seats

Class AAA 3,000 seats

Class AAAA 4,000 seats

Class AAAAA 6,000 seats

(d) Each principal of a school in the playoffs shall certify that the school stadium meets or does not meet football playoff requirements. If a principal certifies such information falsely, then \$2,000.00 of such school's share of the gate receipts of the contest held in the noncomplying stadium shall be paid to the opposing team.

(e) The GHSA will mediate with both teams involved when there are concerns about the safety of a venue in regard to seating limitations.

(f) For Semifinal games, the host school may use portable seating to bring the stadium seating capacity up to the GHSA minimum as long as:

(1) the seating meets the standards of the industry and is installed by professional installers.

(2) all seats provide clear sight lines to the field of play.

(3) no costs for the temporary seating are taken out of game receipts.

NOTE: Any portable seating brought in for games in earlier rounds must meet these specifications.

2. One half of all permanent and temporary seats shall be offered to the visiting team, and it is the responsibility of the home team to regulate the seating so as to guarantee designated seating to the visiting team's supporters.

3. There should be adequate parking space with a recommendation of one (1) space for every four (4) spectators.

4. The stadium shall have adequate working space in the press box as follows (NOTE: the first priority for access to the press box after the clock operator and the PA announcer is the working media):

Class A 30 linear feet

Class AA 30 linear feet

Class AAA 30 linear feet

Class AAAA 40 linear feet

Class AAAAA 50 linear feet

5. Security shall be provided at the site in the ratio of at least one officer per 500 spectators.
6. Facilities for officials to dress, shower, and/or hold meetings shall be made available at the site or nearby.
7. It is mandatory to have emergency medical personnel at the site of all football playoff games.

D. Financial Procedures:

1. Total game receipts will include all revenue from ticket sales plus any payments for radio or television broadcasting, and will not include money from the sale of programs and concessions.

2. All band chaperones and other support personnel must have tickets.

3. The division of game receipts will be handled as follows:

- (a) From the gross receipts:

- (1) Twelve percent (12%) will be sent to the GHSA Office along with a financial report. Each Football Financial Report Form shall include the number of spectators admitted with a GHSA pass, along with a copy of the sign-in sheets listing the names and numbers of the passes used.

- (2) The visiting team shall receive reimbursement for travel expenses in the amount of \$5.00 per mile (one way) taken from the game receipts and guaranteed by the host school. NOTE: If the game is played at a neutral site, both teams will be reimbursed for mileage.

- (3) The game officials shall be paid.

- (b) After the items in Section "a" above have been paid, the remainder shall be divided equally between the two teams.

- (c) Local service charges, stadium charges, lights, cost of operating personnel, etc., are not to be deducted prior to the division of funds, and are considered a part of the expenses of the host school.

4. Broadcasting procedures are handled as follows:

- (a) The GHSA office will process radio contracts in all rounds of the playoffs. The fee schedule and regulations for radio broadcasts may be found in the Broadcast section 2.80.

- (b) Stations wishing to televise football games must contact the GHSA office for contract terms, fees and conditions.

5. Financial arrangements for the championship games held in the Georgia Dome are designated by the GHSA Executive Committee.

E. Game officials will be assigned by the GHSA Office in all playoff rounds. Officiating crews shall include six (6) field officials, clock operator, and chain crew.