



FOOTBALL

2026 Season Overview Bulletin



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2026 GENERAL INFORMATION

CATEGORY	DATE/INFORMATION
LHSAA Football Rules	Read Section 14 of the 2026-27 LHSAA Handbook in its entirety.
Football Schedules	All schedules should be submitted through the LHSAA Members' Only Site. All schedules can be found on the LHSAA Website under Football.
1 st Official Practice <i>without</i> Spring Practice	Monday, July 27, 2026
1 st Official Practice <i>with</i> Spring Practice	Monday, August 3, 2026
1 st Practice in Full Pads <i>without</i> Spring Practice	Thursday, August 6, 2026
1 st Practice in Full Pads <i>with</i> Spring Practice	Thursday, August 13, 2026
Interscholastic Scrimmage	Monday, August 17, 2026 (All students must be registered and submitted online through the LHSAA members' only site)
Jamborees	Thursday, August 27 – Saturday, August 29, 2026 1. The ONLINE approval form will open on Monday, July 20, 2026 2. Host schools must submit the ONLINE approval form by Monday, August 17, 2026, and payment must be received by Monday, August 24, 2026. 3. Fees are \$200 per varsity team and \$100 per sub-varsity team. 4. No other financial reports or additional payments are required by the LHSAA.
1 st Regular Season Contest Dates	Thursday, September 3, 2026
Reporting Weekly Game Results	The HOME school is required to enter the score of the contest online no later than 11:59 pm on the date of the contest for all games. Schools failing to report the score shall be fined \$50 per occurrence.
Fall All-Academic Nomination Deadline	Monday, October 5, 2026 <i>**Note: All-Academic Certificates are now sent to the schools; the certificates are not distributed at LHSAA Championship Events. **</i>
Deadline to Add Games to the Schedule for Power Rating Purposes	Saturday, October 24, 2026 (8 th playing date). (Schools shall notify Kathie Smith at ksmith@lhsaa.org and add the game to the online schedule.)
End of Regular Season	Saturday, November 7, 2026 (10 th playing date.)
Reporting 10 th Week Scores	HOME teams that play on Thursday or Friday shall report their results online immediately following the conclusion of the contest by 11:59 pm. HOME teams that play on Saturday shall report their score on the LHSAA Member Site immediately after the contest, no later than 8:00 PM. (Note: No Saturday game shall begin later than 5:00 PM)
District Chairperson Certification	The District Chairperson shall report the team in his/her district that finished in 1 st place in the district as soon as this is determined and submit the form online on the members-only site. The official reporting form instructions are found in the football section on the LHSAA website and are due Friday, November 6, 2026.
Wild Card Program	See the rules pertaining to this process in the bulletin below.
Post-Season Bowl Games	1. Only schools failing to make the playoffs are eligible. 2. Schools are limited to one (1) bowl game. 3. The host school's principal shall make a written request for approval. 4. Schools shall sign a contract and abide by LHSAA rules. 5. The sponsoring school agrees to and shall submit to the LHSAA ten percent (10%) of the gross ticket receipts within thirty (30) days of the event. 6. Refer to LHSAA Handbook Bylaw 6.17.

<i>CATEGORY</i>	<i>DATE/INFORMATION</i>
<u>PLAYOFFS</u> <u>(NON-SELECT AND SELECT DIVISIONS):</u> Bi-Districts Regionals Quarterfinals Semifinals Finals	November 12-14, 2026 November 19-21, 2026 November 26-28, 2026 December 3-5, 2026 December 10-12, 2026
<u>STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS: SUPERDOME</u> <u>(NON-SELECT)</u> Division I Division II Division III Division IV <u>STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS: SUPERDOME</u> <u>(SELECT)</u> Division I Division II Division III Division IV	<u>Thursday, December 10, 2026</u> 12:00 PM Division IV (Select) 3:30 PM Division IV (Non-Select) 7:00 PM Division III (Non-Select) <u>Friday, December 11, 2026</u> 12:00 PM Division II (Select) 3:30 PM Division III (Select) 7:00 PM Division II (Non-Select) <u>Saturday, December 12, 2026</u> 12:00 PM Division I (Select) 3:30 PM Division I (Non-Select)
Deadline to Declare Spring Practice or No Spring Practice	Friday, January 8, 2027
Winter Practice Session	Monday, January 11 – Saturday, February 6, 2027 (Limited to 10 days with or without pads) Read LHSAA Handbook Bylaw 14.17
Spring Practice Session	Monday, April 26, 2027 – End of School Year
Deadline to Submit 2027 Schedules Online	Monday, May 3, 2027
Summer Rules Begin	Sunday, May 30, 2027



DISTRICT SCHEDULING MEETING

- The District Chairperson shall notify all district members at least ten (10) days in advance of the date, time, and place of the meeting.
- Member schools shall declare in writing, at the meeting, if they will play a varsity schedule and/or if they will play for district honors.
- The District Chairperson and the school's principal shall notify the LHSAA in writing of the school(s) that will not play for district honors and/or a varsity schedule.
- The district principals shall approve the schedule.
- The chairperson shall take and keep the minutes of the meeting.

PRACTICE REGULATIONS

Bylaw 4.1.3 **Practice Regulations:** Any practice shall be in accordance with the following regulations.

1. Student athletes shall not engage in more than three hours of practice activities on those days during which one practice is conducted.
2. Student athletes shall not engage in more than five hours of practice activities on those days during which more than one practice is conducted.
3. The maximum length of any single practice session shall be three hours.
4. On days when more than one practice is conducted, there shall be, at a minimum, two hours of rest/recovery time between the end of one practice and the beginning of the next practice. Rest/recovery time shall be defined as void of any team or individual activity, including but not limited to weight training sessions, conditioning sessions, skill sessions, film sessions, or any other similar athletic session.
5. Schools shall not schedule multiple practices on consecutive days, and student athletes shall not participate in multiple practices on consecutive days.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PLAYING AN OUT-OF-STATE OPPONENT

1. An email must be sent from their State Association stating the school is in good standing to Kathie Smith (ksmith@lhsaa.org). *Note: The State Association must be recognized by the NFHS.*
2. The email shall include the following school information:
 - Name of School
 - School City and State
 - School Phone Number
 - Head Coach Name, Phone Number, and Email Address
 - State Classification
 - Enrollment Numbers
3. Once all information is received, the out-of-state school will be available to schedule on the Members' Only Website.



JAMBOREE INSTRUCTIONS

The Football Jamboree Sanctioning form will be available on the LHSAA Members' Only Site on Monday, July 20, 2026, through the principal's login. All Jamboree sanctioning forms must be submitted **by Monday, August 17, 2026** and payment (online or check) must be received by **Monday, August 24, 2026**.

6.10 **JAMBOREES**

- 6.10.1 A jamboree is an abbreviated competition **including at least three or more teams**. The teams involved in a jamboree do not have to represent three different schools; three or more teams may be from two schools.
- 6.10.2 Only eligible students, properly registered with the LHSAA, shall be allowed to participate in a jamboree.
- 6.10.3 A team shall be allowed to participate in one interschool jamboree during the regular season. Once a team participates in a regular season contest, it shall not participate in a jamboree in that same sport.
- 6.10.4 Play in a jamboree contest is abbreviated for each team in the following manner:

SPORT

LENGTH OF COMPETITION

Football

A total of 30 minutes per contest per team

Jamboree Form: Submission Instructions:

- Principals and/or Athletic Directors will log into the Members' only website, then select "Forms", then "Sanctioning Forms", and finally "Football Jamboree".
- To begin a Football Jamboree Sanctioning form, select "Create New Application to Sanction Football Jamboree", then fill out the Application, and when all information is complete, select "Submit Application".
- Once the application is complete and submitted, the LHSAA will "clear" the form, and the school will be emailed the jamboree invoice. Once the invoice is paid (either online or by mailed check), the jamboree will be approved.
- The host school principal and athletic director will be sent an email when the application is approved. The approved jamboree list is located on the LHSAA website under "Football". *Note: Only the Host School will appear on the approval list.

COACHES' FOOTBALL RULES CLINIC INSTRUCTIONS

The rules clinic will be available online for all football head coaches beginning **Monday, August 10, 2026, and closing on Sunday, August 30, 2026**. All Head Coaches are responsible for completing the online rules clinic before the first playing date.

- 3.8 **RULES CLINIC ATTENDANCE** - *If a school participates in the sports of baseball, girls' and/or boys' basketball, football, girls' and/or boys' golf, girls' and/or boys' soccer, softball, girls' and/or boys' tennis, girls' and/or boys' outdoor track and field, volleyball and/or wrestling, it shall be mandatory, that the head coach shall attend, on-site and/or online, an LHSAA administered state rules clinic in that sport. Coaches arriving late to the on-site rules clinic may not be given credit for attendance. Coaches should confirm that their attendance has been recorded before leaving the on-site clinic. A head coach failing to attend the on-site and/or online rules clinic shall not be allowed to coach an interscholastic contest until he/she completes the required clinic and shall be assessed a \$50 late charge. The LHSAA shall notify the principal of any school whose head coach is in violation of this rule within three working days of the close of the rules clinic. A head coach who meets all other requirements to be a head coach shall not be considered in violation of the coaches' rule for failure to complete the rules clinic prior to verifiable notification by the LHSAA that the rules clinic has not been properly completed by the coach in question.*

1. Go to www.lhsaaonline.org and log in using your assigned username and password. If you do not know your username or password, please contact your **principal** to reset or assign a username and password.
2. Once you are logged in:
 - A. Click the Online Clinics tab
 - B. Click Online Football Clinic under Sports Clinics
 - C. Once your online rules clinic begins, complete and submit your answers.
 - D. If the Football Rules Clinic is not available under your login, please make sure you are listed as the Head Coach for your school.
 - E. If you miss the deadline for the rules clinic, please email ksmith@lhsaa.org so that you can complete the rules clinic before your first scheduled contest.



INSTRUCTIONS FOR REPORTING WEEKLY SCORES

6.12.2 **Reporting Weekly Contest Results Online:** Beginning with the first playing date of the season in the sports of baseball, bowling, **football**, soccer, softball, and volleyball, the home team principal or his/her designee shall be required to enter the results of all contests, including tournament games, **online no later than midnight** on the day the contest is played. Additionally, in the sports of baseball, **football**, and softball, the LHSAA member school principal or his/her designee shall report the results of an out-of-state contest or an open date by the established deadline. Unless disputed by 10:00 p.m. each Monday of each week, the results will stand as posted. In the sport of **football**, on the tenth playing date, disputes shall be submitted by 10:00 p.m. on that Saturday, or the results will stand as posted. Failure by the home team to submit game results shall result in the **home team being fined \$50 for each weekly report not submitted** to the LHSAA by the established deadline.

1. Go to www.lhsaaonline.org and log in using your assigned username and password.
2. Once you are logged in:
 - F. Click the Power Rating tab
 - G. Click Football Power Rating
 - H. Once your schedule appears, select and edit the game
 - I. Enter your game score AND result (Win, Loss)
3. PLEASE NOTE: If you play an out-of-state opponent, you are responsible for the WEEKLY updating of that out-of-state school's wins and losses on the member site.
 - A. Click the Power Rating tab
 - B. Click Football Power Rating
 - C. Click the Reports button at the top of the screen
 - D. Then click U1 – Update Out-of-State Schools' Records Tool under Update Tools.

Update Out of State School Records

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Save Cancel

#	School Name	City	Sport	Last Updated	Updated By	Wins	Losses	Ties	Total Games
1	Charlotte Catholic High School, NC	Charlotte, NC	FB			0	0	0	0
2	Oak Grove High School, MS	Hattiesburg, MS	FB			0	0	0	0

4. After scores have been entered, make sure you click SAVE. The system will automatically generate an email and send it to the opponent team's coach for him to confirm the scores and results. These games will be highlighted in **yellow**, which means the opponent team's coach needs to confirm the scores and results.
5. When a request for a confirmation email is received, use the following instructions:
 - A. Have the games confirmed by 4:00 PM the following day of the game being played.
 - B. If confirmation of a game is not completed by this time, the game will stand reported online.
 - C. Go to the LHSAA member site using your assigned username and password.
 - D. Games that need to be confirmed by this coach will be highlighted in **blue**.
 - E. If scores are correct, click CONFIRM AND SAVE. If there is a discrepancy, click DISPUTE, enter the reason for the dispute, and save. The system will automatically send an email to the LHSAA notifying them of the discrepancy. All disputed games will be highlighted in **red**.



DETERMINING POWER RATING

(Section 14 of the 2026-27 LHSAA Handbook)

14.12 DETERMINING POWER RATING

14.12.1 The power rating for each school shall be rounded to the nearest hundredth (two decimal places) and be determined as follows:

RESULT OF CONTEST	ADD	ADD
Win (10 points) Same Class & Division	N/A	Opponent's Wins/Opponent's Games Played x 10
Higher Class & Division	Add 2 points for each Class & Division up	Opponent's Wins/Opponent's Games Played x 10
Lower Class & Division	N/A	Opponent's Wins/Opponent's Games Played x 10
Loss (0 points) Same Class & Division	N/A	Opponent's Wins/Opponent's Games Played x 10
Higher Class & Division	Add 2 points for each Class & Division up	Opponent's Wins/Opponent's Games Played x 10
Lower Class & Division	N/A	Opponent's Wins/Opponent's Games Played x 10
Double Forfeit	Add 1 point to a team that defeated both teams that forfeited	Opponent's Wins/Opponent's Games Played x 10
Tie (5 points) Out of State	Add ½ point if opponents have tied	Opponent's Wins/Opponent's Games Played x 10

14.12.2 A team's power rating shall be the result of the contest plus any additional points for playing a larger classification plus the opponent's wins divided by the opponent's games played multiplied by ten to get the total power points of games which is divided by the number of total games played during the regular season rounded to the nearest hundredth (two decimal places). Refer to the LHSAA website for an example of how the power rating is determined.

14.12.3 When a team's opponent is an out-of-state team, the classification of the out-of-state team shall be determined by verifying the latest enrollment of the team through its state association and applying its enrollment to the enrollment numbers used in classifying LHSAA schools at the last classification meeting.

1. When a school plays an out-of-state school that has a game remaining on its schedule after the LHSAA's tenth playing date, that game shall not be used in determining the school's power rating.
2. When a school plays an out-of-state school, all contests played that count on their regular season record shall be used to calculate a school's power rating.
3. If an out-of-state opponent plays more than ten regular-season games by the time of the LHSAA's tenth playing date, only the results of the first ten games it played shall be applied in the LHSAA's Wild-Card Program.

14.12.4 When a team's opponent is a junior varsity or "B" team, the result of that game shall not be used in determining the team's power rating or the strength factor.

14.13 DETERMINING STRENGTH FACTOR: The opponent's strength factor shall be determined by adding the sum of the opponent's class to the sum of the opponent's wins and dividing the result by the total number of games played. Refer to the LHSAA website for an example of how the strength factor is determined.



RECOMMENDED REGULAR SEASON PREGAME/HALFTIME PROTOCOLS

Pregame/Halftime

The home team's principal or designee shall communicate with the visiting team principal or designee the procedures that will be used concerning pre-game team warm-ups and support group performances. When possible, the agreed-upon procedures should be attached to the contract as an addendum.

1. Items to be agreed upon:
 - Game time
 - Expected time of arrival of visiting team and support groups
 - Time teams may enter the field for pre-game warm-ups
 - Length of halftime
 - Order of appearance by support groups
2. Things to be considered and the visiting team made aware of in advance:
 - Will there be any special pre-game and/or halftime presentations?
 - Is the game a homecoming event?
 - Is the game a senior recognition night?

When special events are planned, as cited above, the home team should be afforded the opportunity to showcase their students by having a preference as to when the event shall take place (pre-game or halftime). The visiting team should then be afforded the opportunity to showcase their students either in the pre-game, halftime, or post-game when the special event is not taking place.

In no case should the visitors not be given the opportunity for their support groups to perform or their football team not have enough time for warm-ups. In no case should the visitors try to be uncooperative and undermine the home team's special event. During the regular season, homecoming and senior recognition nights shall take precedence, but still allow the visitors an opportunity to perform.

It is recommended that the teams should be allowed up to 45 minutes for their pre-game routine, and the visiting support groups be allowed up to seven (7) minutes of performance in the pre-game, halftime, or post-game.

Support groups shall at no time interfere with a team while on the field or an opponent's support group while on the field.

LED Lighting Systems/Dynamic Light Shows

- The use of LED lighting systems and dynamic light shows is permissible only during:
 - pregame prior to the coin toss.
 - the one-minute intermission between the first and second and the third and fourth periods.
 - the one-minute intermission following a try after a touchdown, successful field goal or safety.
 - halftime.
 - team time-outs.
 - postgame.



RECOMMENDED SPORTSMANSHIP PROTOCOLS

Sportsmanship

1. Towels/Mouthpieces

- Last year and during 2025 preseason scrimmages, we have had on-field altercations caused by players taking their opponents' towels and/or mouthpieces. **If a player takes an opponent's towel and/or mouthpiece, the officials should penalize this action as unsportsmanlike conduct. No warning should be issued.**

2. Pregame Coin Toss

- Football team captains are required to shake hands before the coin toss for all games.
- Sportsmanship remains a point of emphasis, and all stakeholders must remain committed to promoting sportsmanship in education-based athletics. The refusal to shake hands with an opponent is an unsportsmanlike act for several reasons. The refusal itself is a taunting action meant to intimidate an opponent, engender ill will, and demean an opponent in violation of NFHS Football Rule 9-5-1-a. It is a delayed and prolonged act that brings unnecessary attention to the captains themselves in violation of Rule 9-5-1-c, especially considering that it occurs in the middle of the field in the presence of fans and media. Also, the refusal to comply with an official's request to shake hands violates Rule 9-5-1-f.
- Refusing to shake hands is not a spontaneous action by a player in the heat of the moment following a play during the game. It is a calculated decision made before the kickoff and before the captains leave the sideline for the coin toss. This behavior brings embarrassment and ridicule to players, coaches, administrators, principals, districts, and this association, ultimately making a travesty of the high school football game. It is unacceptable for players to behave in this manner at the beginning of a contest, and it is unacceptable for coaches to allow or condone it.
- Refusing to shake hands is not in keeping with the sound traditions of the game. It does not encourage the spirit of respect, integrity, or sportsmanship that all stakeholders of high school athletic contests must seek and establish. The high school football field is an extension of the high school classroom, and all participants must act accordingly.
- To encourage an appropriate atmosphere of sportsmanship between contest opponents, the LHSAA directs that team captains shake hands with their opposing captains at the coin toss. Principals, game administrators, coaches, and game officials are expected to ensure compliance with this directive.
- At midfield, and before the coin is tossed, the Referee will instruct the captains from each team to shake hands. **The refusal of any captain to shake hands with an opposing captain will result in unsportsmanlike conduct fouls that will be charged to the captain and to that captain's head coach.** The fouls will count as one of the two unsportsmanlike conduct fouls, subjecting a player or non-player to disqualification. The penalty will be one fifteen-yard penalty against the team in violation. Unless offset, the penalty will be enforced before the first play.



RECOMMENDED SPORTSMANSHIP PROTOCOLS CONTINUED

3. Fight/Altercation Protocol

- LHSAA Rules 5.11.7 and 5.11.8 mandate ejections and suspensions for student-athletes who participate in fights and players who come off the bench and onto the field during a fight. If a student-athlete leaves the team box area and comes onto the field during a fight, the player is ejected and suspended regardless of whether he did or did not participate in the fight.
- It is imperative that teams practice altercation protocol. See below from *NFHS Football Rules Points of Emphasis*.
- Most fights end quickly. Fights that escalate beyond the initial incident tend to do so because others run toward the fight. Running toward a fight normally contributes to the escalation of the altercation.
 - Prepare before it happens. Make sure to instruct and even practice what to do in case an altercation occurs.
 - Assign specific coaches or administrators to run to the altercation to assist with breaking it up.
 - Assign specific coaches to immediately step off the sideline and turn their attention to keeping the players on the sideline.
 - Team members already on the field should distance themselves from the altercation.
 - Educate all participants about the penalties associated with fighting, leaving the team area, taunting, using offensive gestures, and other unsportsmanlike acts.
 - Instruct your video crew to continue to record or to start recording if an altercation occurs.
 - Know where security is stationed.
 - Keep all non-essential people off the sideline and preferably behind a fence or barrier.

4. Postgame Handshake Incidents

- Last year, the LHSAA informed schools about a social media trend involving players using belts or towels to "whip" opposing players during the postgame handshake. We have already had an incident this year after a scrimmage as teams shook hands. We ask all head coaches to educate their players on handshake protocol and to position staff and/or administrators at the front, middle, and back of the line to support proper conduct. Please advise your film crew to leave the camera on until the completion of the postgame handshake.



BE COOPERATIVE.
BE REASONABLE.
BE UNDERSTANDING.

SPORTSMANSHIP GOES BEYOND THE TEAMS.