



Fall 2025

## MIAA GAME OFFICIALS FALL SEASON NEWSLETTER

Welcome back to school year, 2025-26. Annual registration opened on July 1, and many officials are registering for the fall as well as for the entire year. Thank you to those officials who are planning well ahead and registering early. It is a great help to assignors and leagues to have everyone registered well before the seasons begin.

Over the past four years we have increased the number of officials each year. We have not yet returned to pre-pandemic numbers but are getting closer each year. Please continue to help recruit new officials to your boards and sports. All of you have had success as an official and more officials to choose from will positively impact everyone.

During the summer I was able to dialogue with other state associations about how best to increase the number of officials across the country. The retention of officials beyond the third year seems to be a common challenge. In recent years boards have worked to bring in new officials, but I might suggest that working to retain them in that second and third year may be a new area of attention for everyone.

Continuing to support new officials as they begin their work with your boards and leagues should be a priority for all. Many boards already create opportunities for education and growth of their members. In these first three years consider the difference for new officials growing into this opportunity. Setting a baseline for professionalism may be important in the first year. In the second year, building upon the challenges of the first year and shaking off the newness may be the priority. In the third year, working new officials into more varsity games can be a valuable focus. All officials should consider working with newer officials (1-3 years) in a "mentoring" capacity when they work a game with you. Together every official can continue to support the growth and retainment of new officials.

As stated in previous newsletters, the MIAA began a partnership with RefReps, an online NFHS rules education platform a few years ago. The number of high school students taking the RefReps curriculum during the school day has steadily increased. I hope you will see some of these young officials as you travel from game to game. Let's support them now so they will be around for many, many years!

Oct. 1 is again the deadline to complete MIAA Registration to be eligible for fall post season assignments. Almost all assignors are required by their league to use MIAA registered and background checked officials, so it is best to complete registration immediately before the season begins. Registration deadlines for winter and spring are listed in this newsletter.

Thank you for being a very important part of Massachusetts' interscholastic sports. Your professionalism and hard work make a difference for thousands of young athletes!

Richard L. Pearson  
MIAA Associate Executive Director



# MIAA Tournament Assigning - BEST PRACTICES

As all are aware, rounds prior to the state semi-finals (round of 4) are assigned by the higher seed/home team assignor. This has gone well for the past few years with assignors working to place the best officials on contests during those early rounds. Thank you to all assignors for helping to make the tournament experience a successful opportunity for student athletes.

Many assignors received this same information last year. In preparation for tournament assigning this year, please take a moment to reflect on these “best practices”.

## 1) Conflict of Interest (COI)

- Be sure to vet the individuals very carefully being assigned to a game.
- All **must** avoid assigning an official who has any connection to a school playing in the contest.

### Suggested Procedure:

- ◇ Ask all officials to look at the assigned teams and identify any conflicts they may have – former student of the school, son/daughter attends school, close relative associated with school, ever employed by school, to name a few.
- ◇ Ask the official to immediately inform you of this conflict and agree to switch out for another assignment.
- ◇ Assignors could also ask, in advance, any official being considered to send back a clear list of COI.

## 2) Make sure all assigned officials are approved through the MIAA ArbiterSports Database

- Additional requirements set forth in the MIAA Handbook (Rule 91.1):
  - ◇ Be at least 18 years of age.
  - ◇ Be a certified member of a MIAA-recognized officials' group for the specified sport.
- Be sure the official has met sport specific guidelines (for example – field hockey officials must have officiated in at least 7 varsity games during the season)

## 3) Be certain all officials understand the sport format and MIAA sport specific handbook rules.

- Have a copy of the Sport Format on their person at every assignment.
- Have NFHS rule book (or equivalent) on their person at the contest.
- Have a copy of the sport specific pages from the MIAA Handbook on their person; **very important!**
- Always have any other forms (DQ, etc.) ready and on person at contest

## 4) Assigning yourself to contests

- After much discussion it has been strongly recommended to not assign yourself to **assignments you are responsible for**, and definitely not when only one of the teams in the game is assigned by you during the regular season. The suggestion would be to work with other local assignors you have a relationship with and consider working that game(s)



# MIAA Tournament Assigning - BEST PRACTICES

## 5) Work to spread out assignments.

- Try to include as many different qualified officials as possible.
- Try to avoid duplicating multiple assignments for one person.
- In particular, your best officials whom you will recommend to final two rounds would be best to not duplicate in earlier rounds; it is not guaranteed they will be assigned but if they are, having duplicated them (or more) in previous round has them working 2, 3 or 4 tournament games.

## 6) Do not ask coaches for suggestions.

- There is not a coaches recommendation protocol for tournament assignment; please do not engage in discussion with coaches about whom should be assigned to their contests.
- Use your evaluation system to assign the best and most neutral officials to each game.

## 7) Recommendations to MIAA State Assignor

- Be sure to meet the deadlines for recommending officials to the State Assignor
- ALL assignors must send recommendations as requested; it is not helpful for an assignor to avoid providing recommendations to the State Assignor
- Rank/give feedback to the State Assignor as requested; some responses in the past have not been clear as to detailing your best officials for semi-final and state final assignment.
- Work with State Assignors to send along, as requested, names of officials previously assigned in the tournament, especially Round of 8 assignments.
- Set expectations for your group of officials. Recommending officials does not guarantee an

## Overtime and Suspended Play Quick Reference Document

Athletic directors, coaches, fans, and officials have asked for a quick reference document to access overtime procedures and suspension of play rules. Throughout the years, there have been different NFHS and MIAA specific rules. Now there is a compiled document that can be accessed via the MIAA website. You can access this document by [CLICKING HERE](#). The document contains information about suspended play rules as well as regular season and post-season overtime procedures. This document was compiled to clarify when NFHS rules apply and to also clarify if there is a state association adoption of a specific suspended play/overtime rule. When you view this document you will see strikethroughs when there IS NOT a state association adoption, thereby the NFHS rule fully applies.



# 2025 FALL SPORT RULE HIGHLIGHTS

## CROSS COUNTRY

### Points of Emphasis - [CLICK HERE](#)

- Throws Safety – Shot Put, Discus and Javelin
- Restricted Areas
- Protest/Appeal Process

Visit the [NFHS Track & Field-Cross County](#) page for additional information...

Visit the [MIAA Track & Field-Cross Country](#) page for local rules and information...

### Rules Revisions - [CLICK HERE](#)

- Games Committee can determine takeoff board placement in horizontal jumps
- Athletes are not permitted to wear any type of audio or video recording devices during a race, trial, or while in restricted areas
- Adds 200 meter dash as an option for indoor track meets

## FIELD HOCKEY

### Points of Emphasis - [CLICK HERE](#)

- Penalty Corners
  - a. Substitutions
  - b. Completion of Penalty Corner
- Intentionally Delaying on a Penalty Corner
- Defining Obstruction

Visit the [NFHS Field Hockey](#) page for additional information...

Visit the [MIAA Field Hockey](#) page for local rules and information...

### Rules Revisions - [CLICK HERE](#)

- Home team allowed to wear dark uniform tops
- Allows the option of wearing a wire-caged penalty corner face mask during a penalty corner. Failure to remove the wire-caged mask beyond the 25-yard area results in a player misconduct.
- Establishes a misconduct penalty for a goalkeeper uniform violation.



# 2025 FALL SPORT RULE HIGHLIGHTS

## FOOTBALL

### Points of Emphasis - [CLICK HERE](#)

- Illegal and Improperly Worn Player Equipment
- Sportsmanship
- Defenseless Player/Targeting

### Rules Revisions - [CLICK HERE](#)

- Items that are attached to the tooth and mouth protector that do not serve a purpose and function in protecting the teeth or mouth will not be allowed

- Forward Fumbles Out of Bounds to be Returned to the Spot of the Fumble

Visit the [NFHS Football](#) page for additional information...

Visit the [MIAA Football](#) page for local rules and information...

## SOCCER

### Points of Emphasis - [CLICK HERE](#)

- Education Based High School Athletics
- Courage, Character and Consistency
- Team Areas and Bench Decorum
- Player Uniform Equipment and Safety

### Rules Revisions - [CLICK HERE](#)

- Allowance of substitutions during temporarily suspended game

- Prohibits a coach or team personnel other than the team captain from speaking with a referee during interval between periods, unless beckoned by a referee

Visit the [NFHS Soccer](#) page for additional information...

Visit the [MIAA Soccer](#) page for local rules and information...

## SWIMMING & DIVING

### Points of Emphasis - [CLICK HERE](#)

- Backstroke Ledge Education
- Viability of High School Diving and Importance of Education

Visit the [NFHS Swimming & Diving](#) page for additional information...

Visit the [MIAA Swimming & Diving](#) page for local rules and information...

### Rules Revisions - [CLICK HERE](#)

- Permits the use of backstroke starting ledges if approved with state association adoption



# 2025 FALL SPORT RULE HIGHLIGHTS

## VOLLEYBALL

### Points of Emphasis - [CLICK HERE](#)

- Lineup Card
- Ball Handling
- First Referee Assigning Line Judges
- Uniforms - Contrasting Colors

Visit the [NFHS Volleyball](#) page for additional information...

Visit the [MIAA Volleyball](#) page for local rules and information...

### Rules Revisions - [CLICK HERE](#)

- Beginning with the 2026-27 school year, state associations may adopt the use of a non-smooth or textured volleyball
- Eliminates the judgment call of a multiple contact fault in a single attempt to play the ball on the second team hit if the ball is next contacted by a teammate



## Student and Coach Contest Disqualifications Forms

Please make sure to use the most up-to-date version of the MIAA Student and Coach Contest Disqualification Forms. These forms were updated in August 2023 and are available in the [“Officials” section](#) of the MIAA website. When a student or coach is disqualified from a contest, the required form must be completed by the game official and submitted to the athletic director in charge of the contest before leaving the site. Below are links to each form:

[Student Contest Disqualification Form](#)

[Coach Contest Disqualification Form](#)

Please note - All fields within the form are required to be completed by the game official, as well as a description of the disqualification including the violation called. Forms submitted with incomplete information may be returned.

Rule 49 of the MIAA Handbook details the responsibilities of officials, students, coaches, and athletic directors relative to sportsmanship expectations as well as submission of forms listed above. Below is the portion of the rule pertaining to game officials.

### 49. Sportsmanship: Athlete and Coach Contest Disqualifications/Suspensions

#### 49.1 Game Officials’ Responsibilities

- 49.1.1 The contest official who disqualifies a student or coach under the provision of this rule must immediately inform the coach of each team, official scorer (if any), and state the violation. The contest official(s) must complete the coach/student contest disqualification forms before leaving the site of the contest.
- 49.1.2 If the game official fails to file the written coach/student contest disqualification form, the individual is nevertheless bound by the suspension. An official who fails to complete the required disqualification form shall be suspended from officiating any MIAA contest in that sport for at least two weeks or until the form is completed and received by the principal of the disqualified athlete or coach.
- 49.1.3 Judgments of game officials are not subject to appeal or review. *Refer to 49.3.10 & 49.4.10 for additional information.*
- 49.1.4 Fighting and unsportsmanlike conduct penalties will always be within the authority of the game official. The game official’s authority extends to pre-game and post-game oversight.
- 49.1.5 Additional reasons that an official may disqualify a student or coach from a contest outside of sport codes that would lead to a game disqualification are:
  - Fighting
  - Flagrant unsportsmanlike conduct which is defined but not limited to violent action toward a player, official, or spectator, the use of foul or abusive language, taunting, trash talk, and the like.



# NFHS ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



**LEARNING  
CENTER**

NFHS Learn at this [link](#) has many free courses for officials. Some examples are: Interscholastic Officiating, Implicit Bias, Sportsmanship, and other sport specific courses.

## **Let's Make It Official** - Practical Suggestions for the High School Official

Click below for an overview of officiating, the commitment, rewards and the satisfaction involved in high school officiating. Also, advice is given on how to obtain a schedule, how to advance in the profession, as well as sections on ethics and what the author entitles "Tangible Intangibles."

[CLICK HERE](#) for more...

## **Preseason Conditional for Officials** - by Jeff Tanner

Click below for an editorial outlining the importance of preparing not just academically, but also physically, for the requirements needed to be a great official.

[CLICK HERE](#) for more...

## **NFHS Officials Appreciation Weeks**

The dates of the 2025-26 NFHS Officials Appreciation Weeks have been set and can be found below. This information has been shared with our Member Schools and we've encouraged their participation during these weeks of celebration and recognition of the men and women who work interscholastic sports in Massachusetts!

**Fall - October 5-11, 2025**

**Winter - January 11-17, 2026**

**Spring - April 5-11, 2026**







# NFHS NETWORK OFFICIALS PASS

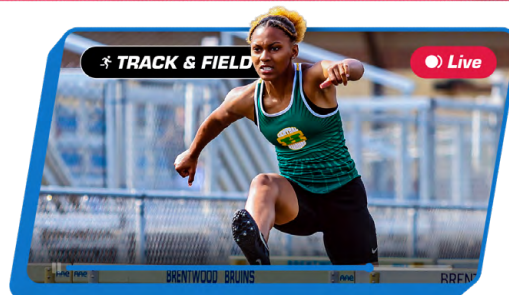
The 2025–26 Season is finally here! We are excited to announce the launch of the NFHS Network Officials Pass for all high school officials across the country.

## The Officials Pass Will Include:

- Gain access to the NFHS Network Console to cut highlights yourself from every event streamed on the NFHS Network.
- 24/7 access to NFHS Network content from August 1st through July 31, 2026.

**WE ARE OFFERING  
THIS ANNUAL PASS AT  
A DISCOUNTED PRICE  
OF ONLY \$39.99**

**TAKE ADVANTAGE NOW**



# MAKE THE RIGHT CALL BECOME A HIGH SCHOOL OFFICIAL

BE THE DIFFERENCE MAKER YOUR COMMUNITY NEEDS

**GET STARTED**



If you know of someone who would be a great fit as an official or has some initial interest, send them to <https://highschoolofficials.com/>

## REGISTER AS AN OFFICIAL TODAY!

Register Annually through **ArbiterSports** - [CLICK HERE](#)

### MIAA Annual Registration Deadlines

To be eligible for MIAA Tournament assignments, all officials must complete annual sport registration. Seasonal Registration will close on the following dates:

Fall Season - Oct. 1

Winter Season - Jan. 15

Spring Season - May 1

*Background checks are valid for three years.*

