



Winter 2025-26

MIAA GAME OFFICIALS WINTER SEASON NEWSLETTER

Our second season of the 2025-26 school year is upon us. For those who officiated this past fall, thank you for your efforts. For those beginning your first officiating season this winter, good luck! Annual registration is always open on July 1 and will close for all winter sports on Jan. 15, 2026. Please be sure to meet that deadline. As I say each season, it is a great help to assignors and leagues to have everyone registered well before the seasons begin.

In our fall newsletter, we talked about the retention of officials. I mentioned that nationally, the retention of officials beyond the third year seems to be a common challenge. We have worked to bring in new officials each year but working to retain them from year to year needs to be the focus.

Supporting the efforts of new officials through mentoring and building relationships through your board will always help to increase the pool of officials. In line with this effort, I am pleased to mention the success of the *RefReps* “school day curriculum” in many of our MIAA member schools. I was pleased to visit numerous classrooms this fall and know there are over 200 students who are studying the rules as a class and working to become an official right now!

A hope for everyone would be for experienced officials to help mentor these new, young officials as soon as possible and develop opportunities for them to gain experience! Whether it is a town league contest, private sports facility or a middle school contest, scheduling a new official with an experienced mentor can make a difference. Facilitating the learning of the rules independently or with some guidance, and then creating a greater emphasis on mentoring, may prove to be an impactful approach.

The partnership with *RefReps* may also benefit boards in their effort to gain new adults to the officiating ranks. I visited one class that was meeting after school in an adult education format with adults and students. If a digital solution like *RefReps* helps to bring people to your sport to officiate then hopefully it will benefit everyone.

Thank you for being a very important part of Massachusetts’s 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 assignment.

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.



2025-26 WINTER SPORT RULE HIGHLIGHTS

BASKETBALL

Points of Emphasis - [CLICK HERE](#)

- Contact on the ball handler
- Faking being fouled
- Bench decorum and communication

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

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

Rules Revisions - [CLICK HERE](#)

- Clarification on goaltending violations
- Change in penalty for inbounder thrower

GYMNASTICS

Points of Emphasis - [CLICK HERE](#)

- Sportsmanship
- Superior Credit
- Evaluating composition

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

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

Rules Revisions - [CLICK HERE](#)

- A number of scoring changes
- Safety additions involving use of tape and chalk on the hands

ICE HOCKEY

Rules Revisions - [CLICK HERE](#)

- No player or goalkeeper shall wear any audio (microphone) or video (camera) device during the game
- A puck on the outside of the goal netting below the crossbar shall be considered in play by both teams. A puck resting on top of the goal netting between the crossbar and goal frame shall be considered unplayable, resulting in an immediate stoppage

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

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



2025-26 WINTER SPORT RULE HIGHLIGHTS

INDOOR TRACK

Points of Emphasis - [CLICK HERE](#)

- Throws safety - shot put, discus & javelin
- Restricted areas
- Protest/Appeal Process

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

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

Rules Revisions - [CLICK HERE](#)

- Expanded powers for Games Committee
- Safety enhancements including downed athlete evaluation without automatic disqualification

SWIMMING & DIVING

Points of Emphasis - [CLICK HERE](#)

- Backstroke ledge education
- Viability of high school diving & importance of education

pools with a minimum of 6 feet (1.84 meters) water depth measured from the starting end through 16 feet 5 inches (5 meters) from the end wall.

Rules Revisions - [CLICK HERE](#)

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

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

Visit the [MIAA Swimming & Diving](#) page for

WRESTLING

Rules Interpretations - [CLICK HERE](#)

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

Rules Revisions - [CLICK HERE](#)

- Modifications to uniform markings and leg sleeve use
- Clarification of technical fall scoring and illegal holds/maneuvers

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



CONGRATULATIONS 2024-25 GAME OFFICIALS OF THE YEAR

The MIAA would like to send their warmest congratulations to the recipients of these distinguished awards. Each individual will be honored at the Annual MIAA Game Official of the Year Banquet on December 15, 2025.

Andrew Rogers	Baseball
Cole McKenney	Boys Basketball
John Kreider	Girls Basketball
Helen Gregory	Cross Country
Laura Lasa	Field Hockey
Paul Sarno	Football
Joseph Flynn	Boys Ice Hockey
Steve Foley	Girls Ice Hockey
Patrick O'Connor	Indoor Track & Field
George Shaheen	Boys Lacrosse
Margaret Curtis	Girls Lacrosse
Brian Moody	Outdoor Track & Field
Michael Rudzinsky	Rugby
Jason Dizek	Boys Soccer
Beth Lepore	Girls Soccer
Kathy Searl	Softball
Kelly Pierce	Swimming & Diving
Chuck Nugent	Swimming & Diving
Ted Wilcox	Girls Volleyball
Jeff Zinchuk	Boys Volleyball
Ed Barrett	Wrestling



STUDENT AND COACH CONTEST DISQUALIFICATION FORMS

Updated **MIAA [Student](#) and [Coach](#) Contest Disqualification Forms** are available in the "[Officials](#)" section of the MIAA website. These forms were updated in June 2025 following approved changes to MIAA Handbook Rule 49. Below are essential reminders for game officials regarding the required completion and submission of these forms when a student or coach disqualification occurs:

1. 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.**
2. Officials must complete **all fields** (**student name, uniform number, grade, school, etc.**) within the form, including a description of the circumstances resulting in the disqualification **and the specific violation called.** Please note that the official's signature and name are required at the bottom of the form.
3. There are three specific check boxes on the student form that should **only be utilized** to indicate violations of MIAA Handbook Rules **49.3.6, 49.3.8 or 49.3.9**. These specific rules generate suspensions greater than one game. Please review these scenarios and corresponding rules below.
Please check below ONLY if the disqualification was issued for the following actions:
 - ☐ Was the violation for fighting, punching or kicking an opposing player, or spitting at someone?
(Rule 49.3.6 – 2 Game Suspension)
 - ☐ Was the violation for physically assaulting an official?
(Rule 49.3.8 – *Recommended One-Year Suspension)
 - ☐ Was the violation for willfully, flagrantly, or maliciously attempting to injure an opponent?
(Rule 49.3.9 – *Recommended One-Year Suspension)
4. Per MIAA Handbook Rule 49.1.3, "Judgments of game officials are not subject to appeal or review." Therefore, the MIAA **does not permit** the review of video footage and/or requests to appeal or reconsider a disqualification. MIAA staff relies solely on the information provided by game officials on the contest disqualification forms and does not have the authority to overturn or reconsider a call made by a game official.

For additional information regarding the responsibilities of game officials when a student or coach contest disqualification occurs, please refer to [MIAA Handbook Rule 49.1](#) (pages 40-41).



STUDENT AND COACH CONTEST DISQUALIFICATION FORMS

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.



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:

Winter Season - Jan. 15

Spring Season - May 1

Background checks are valid for three years.

