Fall 2026

MIAA GAME OFFICIALS FALL SEASON NEWSLETTER

Welcome back for another year of interscholastic sports. As I say at the beginning of every school year, thank you for all that you do as an official for the many, many students at our MIAA schools.

As each of you prepare for the season for your specific sport, please consider what you may be able to improve upon or do differently this school year. Growing and improving each season may be one of the most satisfying aspects of being a game official. One area of officiating that continues to be critically important is communication. Communication between officials that are working in a contest is quite common and one thing that most of you do well. Of course, continue to do that and continue to work to make that clearer and better all the time as it only helps the flow of the game and gives confidence and stability to the role of officials. Between officials that may be verbal, non-verbal or occurring more and more through the use of wireless communication. Communication from the officials to others can be just as important. I am fortunate to have seen so many officials working hard to communicate with the players and or the coaches during the game. Sometimes communication includes a few more details than normal and sometimes it's just very quick, a look, a short comment, or just a redirection. No matter what, it is really important to the game and to the success of the contest. Consider working hard this year on all of your communication needs during the contests. Helping to communicate with players and coaches is always important, but I suggest that in the end think of communication as teaching about sport and teaching how we use sport to learn and grow.

Communicating about sportsmanship is something that all participants need to work on and need to hold in high regard during competition. Sportsmanship is one of the great challenges that has a high impact on the satisfaction of officials as they manage the atmosphere around the game. No question about that. And although I know that officials work very hard to help guide students, players, coaches, and others about sportsmanship, I do think it's worth mentioning and stressing to just not forget that ideal. I am aware that some of the challenges for officials are centered around poor sportsmanship. Our schools and school leaders each continue to help create the right environment at their contests that support excellent sportsmanship. As I led off this article with communicating, I challenge all to help communicate the best in sportsmanship. That might be, as stated earlier, a quick comment to a participant to quiet down. It might be a stop in the game to help redirect a player or maybe a coach. But if all people work hard to clearly communicate what they want, and in particular clarity about sportsmanship, I do believe it will continually improve the competition environment. Let's not forget, as I don't think officials do, that some of the athletes are learning and experiencing a high level of competition for the first time so yes, they get frustrated. Yes, they may react poorly at times. But hopefully, continual and clear communication throughout the game, about the rules of the game or about expectations like sportsmanship will help the athletes grow and improve through sport.

Thank you for all you do. And thank you for all of your efforts to improve as individuals and impact the improvement of those other individuals participating in the contests.

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.

2026 FALL SPORT RULE HIGHLIGHTS

CROSS COUNTRY

Points of Emphasis - **CLICK HERE**

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

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
- Standardizes warm up times for athletes entering the high jump and pole vault after 60 minutes have elapsed

Visit the **NFHS Track & Field-Cross County** page for additional information…

Visit the **MIAA Track & Field-Cross Country** page for local rules and information…

FIELD HOCKEY

Points of Emphasis - **CLICK HERE**

- Penalty Corners
  a. Substitutions
  b. Completion of Penalty Corner
  c. Intentionally Delaying on a Penalty Corner
- Wire-caged face masks outside 25 yard line

Rules Revisions - CLICK HERE

- Tooth and mouth protectors may not include non-functional or unsafe attachments
- Limit substitutions prior to a penalty corner to goalkeeper safety situations
- Assigning responsibility when an attacking player enters the circle early

Visit the **NFHS Field Hockey** page for additional information…

Visit the **MIAA Field Hockey** page for local rules and information…

2026 FALL SPORT RULE HIGHLIGHTS

FOOTBALL

Points of Emphasis - **CLICK HERE**

- Flagrant & Unsportsmanlike Fouls
- Helping the Runner
- Sideline Management & Control

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
- Approved the wearing of play cards on both the forearm/wrist and belt areas of the body

Visit the **NFHS Football** page for additional information…

Visit the **MIAA Football** page for local rules and information…

SOCCER

Points of Emphasis - **CLICK HERE**

- Properly Marked Field
- Shared Professionalism & Bench Accountability
- Managing Goal Celebrations
- Penalty Kick Offenses and the Concept of Impact

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
- Prohibits players from wearing audio or video devices while participating in a match
- flexibility for officials when addressing verbal offenses by categorizing them as indirect free kick fouls

Visit the **NFHS Soccer** page for additional information…

Visit the **MIAA Soccer** page for local rules and information…

2026 FALL SPORT RULE HIGHLIGHTS

SWIMMING & DIVING

Points of Emphasis - **CLICK HERE**

- Relay Judging Platforms
- Exiting the Pool
- Meet Referee's Authority
- Backstroke Flags
- Appropriate Conditions for a Re-Swim

Rules Revisions - CLICK HERE

- Bonded or taped seams on suits are permitted
- No competitor shall wear any audio (microphone) or video (camera) device during the race or dive
- During the finish of the butterfly and freestyle, once some part of the swimmer's head has passed the 5-yard/5-meter mark immediately prior to reaching for the finish, the swimmer may be completely submerged

Visit the **NFHS Swimming & Diving** page for additional information...

Visit the **MIAA Swimming & Diving** page for local rules and information...

VOLLEYBALL

Points of Emphasis - CLICK HERE

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

Rules Revisions - CLICK HERE

- Libero uniform bottoms may be any color and no longer must match the team uniform bottoms
- A team may designate up to two liberos, but only one libero can be in the game at a time
- Players on the serving team are not permitted to raise their hands above their heads during service until the ball has passed beyond the net
- Players shall not wear any audio or video devices during the match

UPDATE GAME FORMS

- **Volleyball Line-up Form**
- **Volleyball Score Sheet**
- **Volleyball Score Sheet - Deciding Game**
- **Libero Tracking Sheet**

Visit the **NFHS Volleyball** page for additional information...

Visit the **MIAA Volleyball** page for local rules and information...

MIAA GOLF RESOURCES

Rules of Golf Education and Tournament Preparation Guide Resources for MIAA Golf Coaches and Student-Athletes

MIAA play is governed by the Rules of Golf as approved by the USGA and The R&A to support continued education and consistency in the application of the Rules of Golf, the following video resources have been compiled to assist MIAA coaches and golfers in understanding common situations encountered during competition.

These Rules of Golf educational videos are available through the USGA website by navigating to "Playing" → "Education." While the USGA Educational Center offers a wide variety of instructional videos, courses, and quizzes, we have highlighted 11 short video overviews covering the rules topics most likely to arise during a round of golf.

These resources are intended to help coaches teach proper procedures, encourage confidence among student-athletes, and promote a consistent understanding of the Rules of Golf across MIAA competitions.

CLICK HERE to access the guide

Student and Coach Contest Disqualifications Forms

Student and Coach Contest Disqualification Forms are available in the "Officials" section of the MIAA website. These forms should be available at all competition sites. When a student or coach is disqualified from a contest, the respective forms must be completed by the game official and submitted to the athletic director in charge of the contest before leaving the site. For additional information, please reference **MIAA Handbook Rule 49**:

- **Student Contest Disqualification Form**
- **Coach Contest Disqualification Form**

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.

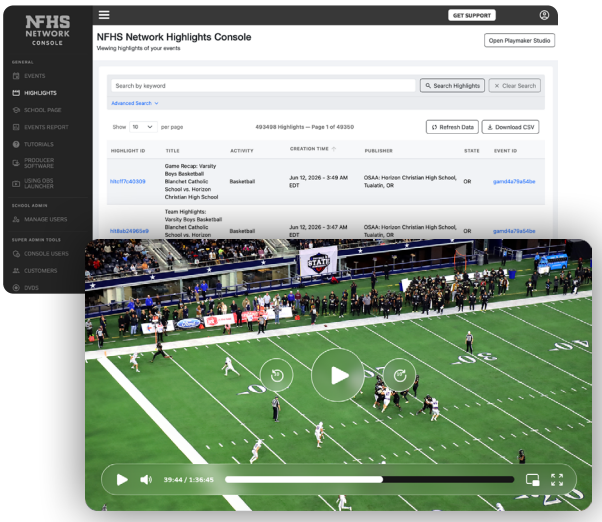
NFHS NETWORK

OFFICIALS PASS

The 2026–27 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, 2027.



Annual Pass

$49.99

50% Off Regular Price

TAKE ADVANTAGE NOW

NFHSNetwork.com

NFHS ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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

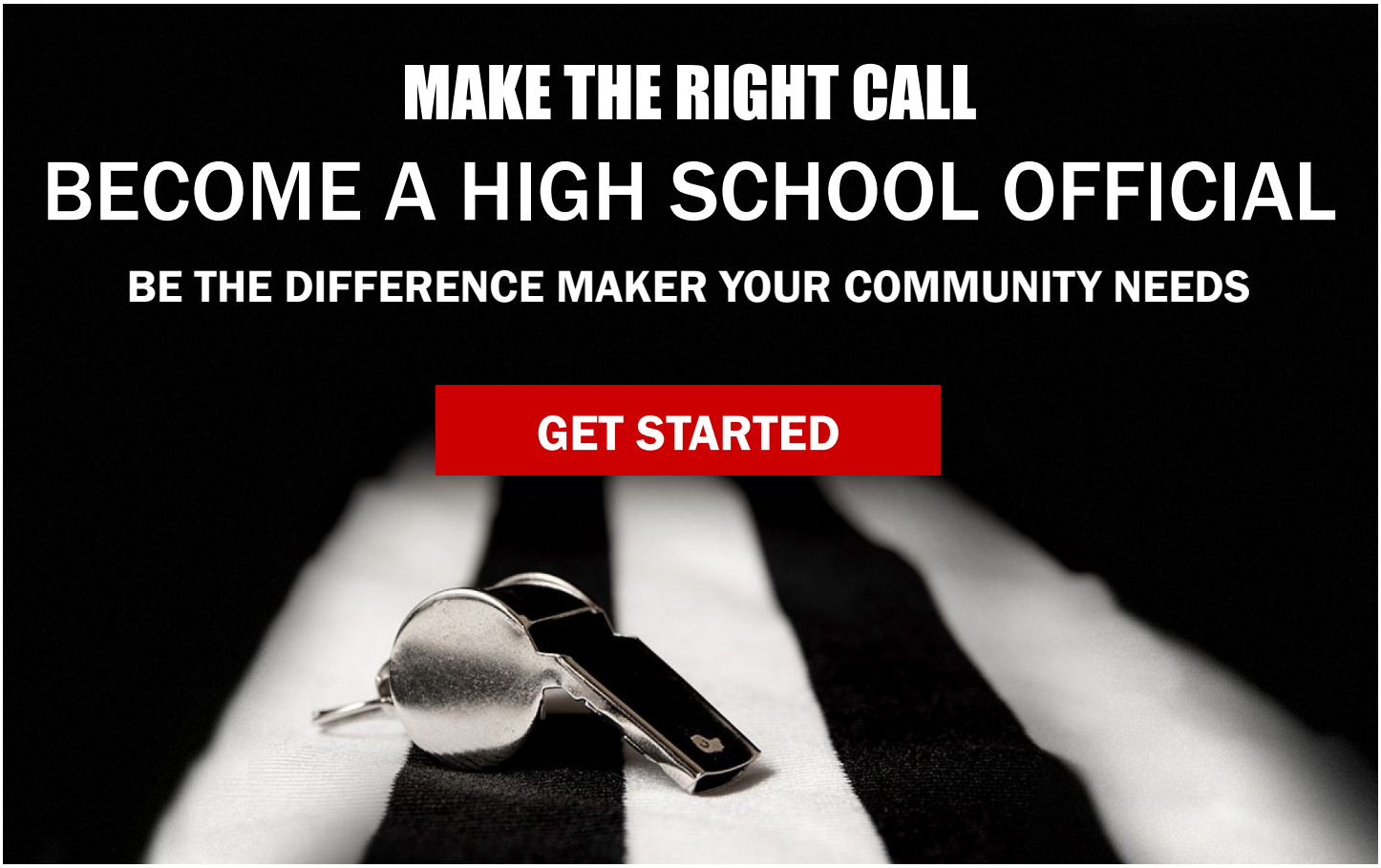
Click below for an editorial outlining the importance of preparing not just academically, but also physically, for the requirements needed to be a great official.

CLICK HERE for more...

NFHS Officials Appreciation Weeks

The dates of the 2026-27 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 4-10, 2026
Winter - January 10-16, 2027
Spring - April 4-10, 2027



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.

Get certified.
Make the calls.
Improve the game.

REF REPS

Hear what Peyton Manning has to say!

Sports officiating courses

- Learn what it is, and what it means, to be a sports official.
- Gain a competitive advantage during game play.
- Fun, interactive class that will help you earn money.
- Stay involved in the sports you love!

Courses available for:

Football
Basketball
Baseball
Softball
Volleyball
Soccer
Flag Football
Swim & Dive
Track & Field
Wrestling
Boys Lacrosse
Girls Lacrosse
Field Hockey
Ice Hockey
Water Polo

TALK TO YOUR TEACHER OR COUNSELOR TO ENROLL TODAY!

GET CERTIFIED.
MAKE THE CALLS.
IMPROVE THE GAME.

REF REPS

Learn more about RefReps!

SPORTS OFFICIATING COURSES

- Learn what it means to be a track and field official.
- Build confidence, leadership, and communication skills.
- Earn money while supporting your local community.
- Stay involved in the track and field events you love!

TRACK AND FIELD OFFICIALS NEEDED - GET INVOLVED TODAY!

SPORTS OFFICIATING COURSE AVAILABLE

Get certified. Make the calls. Improve the game.

Talk to your teacher or counselor to get enrolled!