



2026

Softball

Information

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2026 Softball Tournament

A. TENTATIVE TOURNAMENT DATES*

- Cut-off Date: Monday, May 25, 2026
- Bracket Release: Wednesday, May 27, 2026
- Tournament Begins: May 29, 2026
Note: If both ADs agree, games may be played on May 28, 2026
- Finals: June 12-13, 2026

**Dates subject to change*

B. QUALIFYING CRITERIA

1. A school must schedule and compete in a minimum of 50% of the season competition limit (10 games) per Handbook Rule 34 to be eligible for tournament play.
2. As many as three games with a single opponent may be played and will count towards tournament qualification. League play-off games count.
3. All team sports will qualify the top 32 teams by division.
4. Teams not power seeded in the top 32 but meeting the 50% qualifying criteria will be eligible for the tournament.
5. All team sports will be seeded by the power ranking system.
6. Top 4 seeded teams placed in four brackets (1,2,3,4).
7. The rest of the bracket positions are filled with the remaining teams by power ranking system. After the top 32 teams are power seeded, the remaining teams with a 50% or better record will be seeded from the bottom of each bracket.
8. All games will be at the home site of the higher seed for Preliminary Play in games, Round of 32, Round of 16 and Round of 8.

C. FORFEITED CONTESTS

When a forfeit win is awarded to a school due to the termination of their opponent's softball program or failure to fulfill their contractual obligation, for power ranking purposes, the score will be entered as 5-0.

D. SEEDING/ PAIRING ANNOUNCEMENT

1. Seeding is to be done by a Seasonal Seeding Committee. Members of the Seasonal Seeding Committee will include one chairperson (or designee) from each sport of the current season, and four (4) Tournament Management Committee members. Tournament Directors and Executive Liaisons will be present but are non-voting members. All decisions made by the Seasonal Seeding Committee are final. No appeals regarding seeding decisions will be allowed.
2. Seeding will be done by a power rating system:
 - Team's average margin of victory + average of opponents' ratings = overall rating
3. Tie Breaking Procedure (Seeding)
 - a. Head-to-head Competition
 - b. The higher average of each team's opponents' rating, based on the power rating formula.
 - c. League Champion
 - d. Coin flip
 - Only 2 teams tied – use coin flip
 - More than 2 teams, all team names will be put into a hat. Once team name will be drawn – that team wins the tiebreaker. All other remaining teams will return to step a.

In a tie breaker for tournament seeding every game played including exclusion games are counted.
Note: If a tie involves multiple teams (more than 2) and a team is eliminated, the procedure starts over at step a with the remaining teams.
4. Pairings and Tournament Information will be available on MIAA website, <https://miaa.net/> throughout the tournament.
5. Tournament contest results should be called in to the Tournament Administrator by the winning team, as soon as possible, from the game site.



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E. SITE INFORMATION

1. All matches will be at home site of the higher seed for the Preliminary Play-in games, Round of 32, Round of 16, and Round of 8.
2. If home team site is not acceptable the following will apply:
 - Home school AD finds an acceptable site
 - Lower seed will host the match
 - If both sites are not acceptable, Tournament administrator will place match at an acceptable site within MIAA site policy
3. The MIAA will provide sites for State Semi Finals (round of 4) and State Finals as defined by TMC Site policy.
4. Home field venues must meet the following standards from the MIAA handbook:
 - Condition of playing surface
 - Crowd Control
 - Seating capacity
 - Ticket sales control
 - Locker rooms
 - Acceptable lights for night games

F. TOURNAMENT GAME OFFICIALS

1. Rated and enrolled MIAA Softball Officials will be assigned to all tournament games.
2. Umpires must have officiated a minimum of nine (9) MIAA high school games during the regular season.
3. Umpires: The host (higher seeded team) is responsible for securing the officials (through the league assignor most likely) in the preliminary round, round of 32, round of 16, and round of 8. The State Semi-Final and State Finals will be assigned by the MIAA.
4. State Semi-final and Final – three umpires
State Finals: The State Tournament Director is responsible for assigning officials.

G. GAME MANAGEMENT

1. Team Size and Bench
 - a. Only twenty (20) players, one (1) manager, two (2) coaches and one (1) scorer are permitted on the bench.
 - b. Any team not able to field a nine (9) player team will forfeit the game. Forfeiting any game means disqualification from the tournament.
2. Start Time
Tournament games on school days shall be scheduled to start no earlier than 3:15 p.m. or no later than 7:00 p.m. (unless mutually agreed by administration of both teams). There will be a fifteen (15) minute grace period.
3. Adverse Conditions or Postponements
 - a. In case of postponement due to weather, field conditions or when a game needs to be replayed, the Athletic Director and Tournament Director will determine a new game date (which will be the following day if possible).
 - b. The decision to call a game due to weather shall be made 3 hours prior to game time if possible on game day.
 - c. The following criteria will be used when considering the postponement of a game.
 - 1) Health and welfare of the student-athletes
 - 2) Travel conditions for participants and fans
 - 3) Alternative scheduling options
 - d. In all games this responsibility rests with the athletic director whose field is being used for play, in consultation with the tournament director.
 - e. If, due to unforeseen circumstances such as a sudden rain after the call-off time, the plate umpire will decide, in the presence of both teams, if the game is to be postponed.
 - f. Once a game is started, the plate umpire will be in charge of calling the game.



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- g. *If there is doubt as to whether the game will be played, principal or athletic director of the teams involved should call their respective tournament director.*

4. Uniforms / Equipment

- a. All players must wear identical school issued uniforms. These uniforms must be worn for the entirety of the game, including any and all post game presentations.
- b. When hats are worn they must be school issued and identical.
- c. All high school catchers must wear a baseball/softball type shin guard.
- d. Black sun glare **only** worn under the eyes is permitted. No colored "war paint" or temporary tattoo is to be worn.
- e. Metal Cleats and toe plates WILL be allowed as of the Spring 2014 season.

5. Game Ball

- a. Approved NFHS balls must be supplied by the higher seeded schools for all games up to the state semi-final and state final games.
- b. For all semi-final and state final games, balls will be supplied by the tournament director. In 2025-2028, the official tournament ball supplied will be the *Spalding- Thunder Heat Dudley 43-147*.

H. GAME RULES

1. Rules

- a. The tournament will be conducted in accordance with the 2025-2027 MIAA Handbook, and the 2026 National Federation Rules and Regulations with the following exception:
 - 1. The tie breaker rule will not be used. Games will be played until a winner is determined.

2. Home Team

- a. All matches will be at the home site of the higher seed for the Preliminary Play-in games, Round of 32, Round of 16, and Round of 8.
- b. State - For the state semi-final and final round games the higher seeded team is the home team for the game and has the choice of batting first or last as well as choice of bench area.

3. Batting Practice

- a. Batting practice will be allowed but not on the game infield.
- b. Each team will be allowed 10 minutes of fielding practice that includes use of the mound.

4. Scorer

- a. The home team for the game will be the official scorer.
- b. Line-ups must be presented ten (10) minutes before game time to the official scorer and to the plate umpire.
- c. The plate umpire will check both scorebooks after each half inning.

5. Protest - Protests must be settled on the playing field according to the rules of Softball.

6. Game Length / Suspended Game

- a. Games prior to the round of 8:
 - 1) A regulation game shall consist of seven (7) innings with extra innings being played if necessary.
 - 2) A game called by the umpire shall be regulation if five (5) or more complete innings have been played or if the team second at bat is leading at the conclusion of four and one half (4 1/2) innings.
- b. Beginning in the round of 8 and state semi-final, all games must be seven (7) completed innings, with extra innings being played, if necessary.
- c. All suspended games are to be played from the point of suspension (not replayed from the beginning).

7. Mercy Rule - The 12 run rule applies in tournament play, prior to the round of 8. Complete innings must be played unless the home team scores the run ahead limit while at bat. When the visiting team reaches the limit in the top half of the inning, the home team must have their opportunity to bat in the bottom half of the inning.



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8. Sportsmanship / Disqualifications

a. Coaches

- 1) Coaches are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner.
- 2) Coaches ejected from the game ***must leave the premises or a game forfeit results.***
- 3) When a coach is ejected from the game there must be responsible adult representation in control of participants at all times. Such adult representation must be an employee or designated representative of the school district. Failure to have the proper adult representation will result in a game forfeiture.

b. Suspension Forms

- 1) The athletic director or site manager in charge of the game is responsible for having the official suspension forms available for game officials.
- 2) The official(s) shall complete the form(s) before leaving the site of the game.

9. Warm-ups

- a. Any person warming up a pitcher **AT ANY LOCATION** shall wear a mask with a throat protector.
- b. Only team personnel may be involved in warming up players.

I. MEDIA

1. Only allowed in designated area, as determined by the Site Director, as long as they control their equipment.
2. As per NFHS rule 1-1-7: The media shall be prohibited from being in live-ball area. The home team or game management may designate an area for the media in dead ball territory.

J. MEDICAL

A licensed athletic trainer, physician, physician's assistant, certified EMT, or nurse practitioner will be available at all contests. This coverage will be provided by the Host School in tournament rounds at the site of the higher seeded team. The MIAA will provide coverage at the State Semi Final and State Final sites.

K. SAT/SAT SUBJECT TESTS

1. Tournament Games may be scheduled for the same date as the SAT and SAT Subject Tests. Please tell all coaches and student-athletes now so alternative plans may be made. A listing of scheduled College Board exam dates can be found at <https://www.collegeboard.org>.
2. The College Board offers a SAT® Program Alternate Test Date Policy. As stated in their published material: "The SAT Program will consider granting an alternate test date for the following criteria: The conflicting event must be unexpected. Regularly scheduled sporting events or previously scheduled school activities, such as a prom, are not considered unexpected. An event such as an academic or athletic competition, in which students have advanced through the competition or into post-regular season competition, can be considered an unexpected event."
3. SAT School Day: Allows high schools to administer the SAT to students during the school day, thus avoiding weekend athletic conflicts. To find out whether your school offers SAT School Day, contact your principal or counselor.

L. MIAA DRONE POLICY

Prohibiting the use of Drones (Unmanned Aircraft Systems or UAS's). Unless granted special permission by the MIAA Executive Director, the use of drones (UAS), for any purpose, is not permitted at any MIAA tournament event. This Prohibition applies to all fields of play, courts, arena, mats, gym floor or pool, and covers a ban on the entire facility being used as part of the MIAA event, including the spectator stands and parking area.