

SECTION 4: INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETIC ACTIVITIES

4.1 COMPETITION: *This section is applicable to interscholastic athletic activities included in 4.2 – 4.14.*

4.1.1 Mailings: Rule books will be mailed to athletic directors prior to the beginning of regular season practice except for the sports of golf and tennis. All other information can be found in the athletic activities section of the Handbook or on the NCHSAA website.

4.1.2 Classifications: A, AA, AAA, AAAA for all sports except:

- (a) Football for playoffs, classes are subdivided to 1-A and 1-AA, 2-A and 2-AA, 3-A and 3-AA, 4-A and 4-AA.
- (b) Women's Golf classes are A/AA, AAA, and AAAA.
- (c) Lacrosse (women) are open classification.
- (d) Lacrosse (men) A/AA/AAA, and AAAA.
- (e) Swimming (men and women) A/AA, AAA, and AAAA.
- (f) Indoor Track (men and women) A/AA, AAA, and AAAA.

4.1.3 Organizational Meeting: An organizational meeting for the purpose of discussing policies, academics, distributing physical forms and the like, or equipment issue prior to the opening date of practice is allowed, but no sports instruction would be permitted in that setting.

4.1.4 Preseason Certification (Eligibility Summary Form): Each member school must submit its preseason certification information (Eligibility Summary Form) on the NCHSAA website.

- (a) It certifies that all pre-season meetings have been conducted.
- (b) It certifies that student-athletes and their parents have signed the sportsmanship pledge, and also certifies that their student-athletes are eligible in all respects.
- (c) Dates for submission to NCHSAA are September 1 (fall), December 1 (winter), and March 15 (spring).
- (d) In addition, each coach must certify signing the code of conduct for coaches, viewing the Eligibility Video, and that each school has an updated Emergency Action Plan.
- (e) All coaches, athletes, and parents are required to view the "CrashCourse" Concussion Video prior to participation.

4.1.5 Preseason Scrimmages: All sports at the high school are permitted two preseason varsity scrimmages, with the exception of football, and this competition can be between two schools or with multiple schools.

- (a) Cross country, golf, swimming and tennis. No officials are required.
- (b) Football – Five (5) hours of preseason scrimmage time is allowed. Live kicking situations are allowable only when officials are present. These scrimmages cannot occur until at least 8 separate days of practice have been completed (reference 4.5.2.b.5). NCHSAA-registered officials must be used for at least two hours of the allotted total of five and is recommended for use for all five hours. Scrimmages may be conducted between two (2) or multiple schools.
 - (i) Student athletes must be given a minimum of 48 hours between scrimmages and 72 hours are recommended.
- (c) Two scrimmages may be held in the same preseason week, and the preseason scrimmages must be conducted as events open to the public (no closed scrimmages allowed).
- (d) Junior varsity scrimmages are allowed in conjunction with varsity scrimmages, at the same time and site.
- (e) Scrimmages must be played prior to the first regular season contest and are subject to the regular weekly limitations in terms of numbers of contests (exception: football).
- (f) For the sports of football, volleyball, soccer, basketball, wrestling, lacrosse, baseball and softball, officials must be used in at least one of the school's scrimmages so that there will be common exposure to rules situations.
- (g) Officials are to be assigned to work a maximum of two hours per scrimmage.
- (h) Admission may be charged.
- (i) Only eligible athletes may participate
- (j) Non-school participants may assist the coaching staff in an instructional or demonstrational manner. But any scrimmage-type competition or activity between non-school participants and high school team members is regarded as a game, which is then subject to games-per-week, season limitations, and use of NCHSAA-registered officials.
- (k) Any kind of practice game or scrimmage with outside competition during the regular season must be counted as a regular contest and must not exceed daily, weekly or seasonal limits.
- (l) Schools that have individuals qualifying to the regional and/or state individual playoffs, after the regular season is over for the team (for the sport of wrestling, once individual regional seeding is completed) may work out or scrimmage one-on-one against students from another school where competition is not available at their own school. The number is limited to one partner for each qualifier advancing, whether from their own school or another school.

- 4.1.6 **Endowment Games:** One endowment game may be played, which does not count against the regular season game limitation. The host school must request and be granted prior permission by the NCHSAA to play the endowment game (the request form will be on the NCHSAA website). The opponent must be informed of the request to be classified as an endowment game. **NOTE:** (see 2.2.7.b)
- (a) Twenty-five (25) percent of the gross revenue will be remitted to the NCHSAA's endowment fund; expenses will be deducted from the remaining proceeds and the competing schools will divide the remainder. The competing schools are responsible for determining allowable expenses and the team shares.
 - (1) If a member school plays an endowment game against a non-member school, the member school is responsible for remitting payment to the NCHSAA regardless of where the game is played.
 - (b) The NCHSAA may approve additional endowment game requests to assist member schools with scheduling issues; however, under no circumstances may any additional endowment game (other than the one allowed and described above) be played that would otherwise result in any member school exceeding the regular season game limitation.
 - (c) Once an endowment game is played it will remain as an Endowment Game and can not be changed to a regular season game due to issues with the schedule (Reference 2.2.7.b).
 - (d) Other than an Endowment Game, no other contests with outside opponents are permitted prior to the earliest date for a game in each sport season. In football, no contest, including an endowment game, is permitted prior to the first play date without NCHSAA permission.
- 4.1.7 **Payment of Officials:** Officials are to be paid based on local fiscal policy as soon as possible. Officials are not required for the sports of cross country, golf, tennis, and track and field. For more information, reference 3.3.2.a.1.
- 4.1.8 **Eligibility Sheets:** Eligibility sheets should be kept on file at the local school; must be made available to the NCHSAA upon request and are required to be shared among conference members.
- 4.1.9 **Ejection/Disqualification Reports:** Officials must electronically file the required ejection/disqualification reports to the NCHSAA within 24 hours of the contest's completion. The NCHSAA will electronically send copies of the ejection/disqualification report to the principal, athletic director and regional supervisor. Athletic directors are required to submit a confirmation email upon receipt of the ejection/disqualification report. The confirmation must be submitted within 24 hours of receiving the ejection/disqualification report and is subject to a \$100 fine. If the wrong player is identified, a correction can be made through the regional supervisors and the NCHSAA. For more on the Sportsmanship/Ejection Policy and Penalties, reference 2.5.6 and 2.5.7.
- (a) For soccer, go to Yellow Card Tracking and Ejections in the Soccer section 4.8.1.k..
 - (b) For wrestling, in addition to the above, during a two day tournament, if a wrestler is ejected on Friday, this wrestler must miss Saturday of that tournament AND the next contest. If a wrestler is ejected on Saturday, this wrestler must miss the next TWO CONTESTS.
- 4.1.10 **Team Championships:** In sports where applicable, a team must have multiple entries in the event to achieve a team championship.
- (a) An individual may not earn a team title.
 - (b) For reclassification purposes, a school must have a bona fide team to be counted toward the total of schools fielding teams in a classification.
 - (c) A "team" is defined as "two or more students practicing and competing in a regularly scheduled school season."
- 4.1.11 **Interstate Competition:** (see Sanctioning Chart Page 114)
- (a) **One-On-One Out of State Opponents:** All contests between two (2) teams during the sports season, whether home or away including scrimmage and regular season involving a non-North Carolina school (not applying to foreign country teams), are approved, provided there is no loss of school time (unless the LEA approves such a contest). No sanction required.
 - (b) **Interstate Competition Requiring National Federation Sanction:** Interstate competition that meets at least one of the following requirements:
 - (1) Any interstate (including bordering states) or international event involving two (2) or more schools which is co-sponsored by or titled in the name of an organization outside the school community (e.g., a college/university, a theme park, an athletic shoe/apparel company, etc.).
 - (2) Event that involves non-bordering state(s) if more than five (5) states are involved.
 - (3) Event that involves non-bordering state(s) if more than eight (8) schools are involved.
 - (4) Any event involving two (2) or more schools that involves a team from a foreign country. The host school should complete the NFHS Sanction Application. Those would include any event(s) that involves international traveling teams that play multiple games in multiple states. (The exception to this rule are Canada and Mexico, which are considered "bordering states").
 - (5) For online registration, go to www.NFHS.org and click on Sanctioning.

- (c) **Border/Interstate Competition Requiring State Sanction Only:** Interstate competition when an event does not meet any of the National Federation Sanctioning requirements but involves at least one of the following:
- (1) Event only involves state(s) that border North Carolina (Georgia, South Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia)
 - (2) Five (5) or fewer states participating when there is a non-bordering state involved.
 - (3) Eight (8) or fewer schools participating when there is a non-bordering state involved.
 - (4) See Border/Interstate Sanctioning Form on the NCHSAA website. State for the above competitions must be made through the NCHSAA office a minimum of 30 days in advance of the proposed contest.

4.1.12 **Games with Non-Conference Opponents:** No game which has been scheduled with a non-conference opponent shall be allowed to interfere with the breaking of a tie between, or among, conference teams or with a conference tournament or playoff game.

- (a) If such non-conference game shall conflict with the game, or games, necessary to break a conference deadlock, the school concerned shall at once:
- (1) Cancel its nonconference game;
 - (2) Submit to the drawing, notwithstanding its non-conference scheduled game; or
 - (3) Accept the ruling of the Executive Committee that its former percentage has been canceled.

4.1.13 **Tiebreaking Procedure:** All parts of this procedure are mandatory. The steps should be followed in the order as they appear in the procedure.

- (a) **Determining Conference Standings:** These rules apply for determining the final regular season standings in any sport in which a conference awards its conference championship on the basis of regular season competition.

- (1) The conference standings shall be determined on the basis of the percentage of conference games won by each team at the end of the regular season, based on conference regulations and subject to the tiebreaking procedure which follows. The team finishing in first place shall be recognized as the conference champion; if a tie exists for first place, then conference co-champions, tri-champions, etc., shall be declared.

- (2) If two or more teams have equal conference percentages at the end of the season, the team that has the edge in head-to-head competition will get the higher place in the standings. All conference games played against each other would count in the head-to-head competition. The intent is to break the tie by using the tied teams.

Ex. 1: If there is a four-way tie for first and Team A and Team B are 2-1 while Team C and Team D are 1-2, in games among the four of them, A and B would be tied for first by virtue of their 2-1, with C and D tied for third. Then look at head-to-head between the two (A and B) to break that tie, and then between the other two (C and D) to break that remaining tie.

Ex. 2: Teams A, B and C are tied for fourth in the conference standings with identical records. In games among the three, A was 3-1, B was 2-2 and C was 1-3. The tie is broken; A is fourth, B is fifth and C sixth.

- (3) Any time throughout the whole procedure that a multiple tie is reduced to two teams, no matter what criteria is being used, use head-to-head conference competition between those remaining if possible.

- (b) **Determining Conference Tournament Seeding:** The following rules are used to seed conference tournaments on the basis of regular season standings. Use this section only to seed for conference tournaments and only after 4.1.13 (a) is completed; if no conference tournament, proceed to 4.1.13.c.

- (1) Seed the tournament on the basis of final regular season standings; see 4.1.13.a.
- (2) If two or more teams are tied, and the teams played any non-conference games against each other, the team with the better record in all head-to-head games get the higher conference seed. (If there is a multiple tie of three or more teams, one team must have beaten all the other teams for these non-conference games to be used). Note that use of these non-conference or tournament meetings prior to the conference tournament is ONLY for seeding in the conference tournament (exception see 4.1.13.c.5).

Ex: Team A and B split in regular season, but played one another in a non-conference game and A won. A would get the higher seed in the conference tournament. Say A and B were tied for fourth in an eight-team league and this occurred; A would get the higher seed in the tournament. However, the meeting in the conference tournament between A and B would be the tiebreaker between the two for determining NCHSAA playoff representatives (see 4.1.13.c.2).

- (3) If there is still a tie for a tournament seed, it will be resolved by comparing how the tied teams fared against the rest of the conference until the tie is broken.

- Ex 1:** A and B finished with equal conference records and split during the regular season, thereby tying for third place in the standings. They did not play each other in a non-conference game. Go to the number one position in the conference and compare how A and B did against that team. Say the tie cannot be resolved there (both teams split with the number-one team), so go to the number two team. Team A lost twice to the number two but B split with the number-two team. Therefore B would be seeded third and A fourth (even though they finished tied for third in the final standings).
- Ex 2:** There is a four-way tie for first among A, B, C and D. Team A and B are each 2-1 while C and D are each 1-2 in games among the four. A and B are tied for the first seed, while C and D are tied for third seed. Now look at head to head competition between A and B to break that tie, and head to head between C and D to break the other remaining tie.
- (4) If the tie still exists, a draw will be held by the tied teams for the seeds available. All tied teams for a position will draw with the numbers of the spots for which they are tied in a hat.
- Ex:** A and B are tied for third and the tie is not resolved after going through the procedure in 4.1.13.b.3 above. The numbers three and four are put in a hat, and the schools will draw and assume the seed of the number drawn. The drawing will be done in alphabetical order as the schools are listed in the NCHSAA Directory.
- (c) **Determining NCHSAA Playoff Representatives:** The following rules are used to determine which teams earn available berths into the NCHSAA playoffs, awarded on the basis of regular season standings. These are used AFTER completion of the conference tournament, or BEFORE NCHSAA PLAYOFFS if there is no tournament.
- (1) Award berths based on final regular season standings (see 4.1.13.a). Note that if a tie is broken using head to head competition, the tie is broken from that point on and there is no need to use other criteria.
- (2) If two are tied in the final standings after being eliminated from the conference tournament (or before NCHSAA Playoffs if there is no tournament), a special playoff game will be played unless the tied teams mutually agree to break the tie by other means. The playoff game may not violate the weekly limitations, and it could be preliminary game to the state playoffs or a game in the conference tournament. No playoff game shall be played prior to a conference tournament. A meeting between the tied teams which occurs in any round in the conference tournament would count as the playoff game.
- (3) If both teams are eliminated from the conference tournament but can still play the playoff game and not violate the weekly limitations, it shall be played. **Exception:** If a team advances to the conference tournament finals, even if a playoff game would not violate the weekly limitations, the game will not be played, and the team that advances to the finals gets the higher seed.
- (4) If three or more teams are tied, the team which advanced the furthest in the conference tournament will get the higher berth in the playoffs.
- (i) Split Conference Application Only: If two or more teams are still tied, and the teams represent different classifications, berths will be awarded by separating teams into their respective classifications. Then head-to-head competition among the teams in the respective classifications must be considered if necessary.
- (5) If the tie is not broken after (4), all previous head-to-head competition is used to break the tie (cannot be used with multiple ties).
- (6) If there is still a tie, it will be resolved by comparing how the tied team fared against the rest of the conference, starting with the number one team and moving down, if necessary, throughout the conference until the tie is broken.
- Ex:** A and B finished with equal conference records and split during the regular season, thereby tying for third place in the standings. A playoff game could not be played and they did not play each other in a non-conference game. Go to the number one position in the conference and compare how A and B did against that team in conference games. Say the tie cannot be resolved there (both teams split with the number-one team), so go to the number two team. Team A lost twice to the number two but B split with the number-two team. Therefore, B would be seeded third and A fourth (even though they finished tied for third in the final standings).
- (7) If the tie still exists, a draw will be held by the tied teams for the seeds available. All tied teams for a position will draw with the numbers of the spots for which they are tied in a hat.
- Ex:** A and B are tied for third and the tie is not resolved after going through the procedure through 4.1.13.b.3 above. The numbers three and four are put in a hat, and the schools will draw and assume the seed of the number drawn. The drawing will be done in alphabetical order as the schools are listed in the NCHSAA Directory.

- 4.1.14 **Playoff Declaration:** A school has the option to “opt out” of the playoffs, provided it fills out the Playoff Declaration Form on the website, and submits it and it is in the NCHSAA offices prior to the reporting deadline for that specific sport. Proper submission means the school will not be considered for either an automatic berth or a wild card position. If the form is not submitted, then the school will be considered and may qualify for a playoff berth.
- (a) The above does not apply to the sports of cross country, golf, swimming, and track and field.
- 4.1.15 **Reporting Playoff Qualifiers:** Schools must submit their completed and accurate schedule and results into MaxPreps to be considered for playoff qualification for the sports of Baseball, Basketball, Football, Lacrosse, Soccer, Softball, Dual Team Tennis, Volleyball, Dual Team Wrestling. Conference administrators must use this information to submit the final order of finish to the NCHSAA.
- (a) For reporting potential qualifiers to state playoffs, conference administrators are required to submit the appropriate information online immediately upon conclusion of the regular season.
- (b) Failure to comply with the reporting procedure will result in a \$400 fine to the school or conference in question.
- (c) All sports, with the exceptions of dual team tennis, dual team wrestling and lacrosse, will use seeded brackets (see also, Seeding 4.1.19)
- (d) Upon conclusion of the conference tournament, the conference administrator will immediately submit the final conference standings of all teams. The records that are listed on the brackets when playoff qualifiers are posted by the NCHSAA will represent the overall record of each team.
- NOTE:** If a team qualifies for a playoff berth but is ineligible for further competition due to violation of the ejection policy, its position is vacated.
- (e) Check the NCHSAA website for additional information.
- 4.1.16 **Submission of Incorrect Record:** Once the seeding process is completed and the brackets have been finalized, if a team has submitted an incorrect record, and the seed is affected, that team will be removed from the bracket and no other team will be substituted in or added to the playoffs. **Note:** Incorrect records can be changed during the NCHSAA designated “window of opportunity.” Reference 3.2.3 (d)(e) & (f).
- 4.1.17 **Bracket Sizes:**
- (a) Baseball, Soccer, Softball
- (1) 1A & 4A: 48-team brackets
- (2) 2A & 3A: 64-team brackets
- (b) Basketball, Volleyball
- (1) 4A: 48-team bracket
- (2) 1A, 2A & 3A: 64-team brackets
- (b) Football
- (1) 1A & 4A: 48-team brackets
- (i) Subdivided into 1A, 1AA, 4A, 4AA (24-team brackets)
- (2) 2A & 3A: 64-team brackets
- (ii) Subdivided into 2A, 2AA, 3A, 3AA (32-team brackets)
- (c) Tennis, Wrestling
- (1) 1A: 24-team bracket
- (2) 2A, 3A, & 4A: 32-team brackets
- (d) Lacrosse
- (1) Men's 1A/2A/3A & 4A: 32-team brackets
- (2) Women's: 40-team bracket
- 4.1.18 **Playoff Berths/Qualification:**
- (a) Lacrosse, Tennis and Wrestling will use pre-determined brackets which will be posted on NCHSAA Website when they become available.
- (b) With the exception of the above provision in 4.1.18 (a), conference automatic qualifiers are determined by the number of teams from a given classification in each conference as follows:
- (1) 1 – 4 teams = 1 automatic qualifier
- (2) 5 – 8 teams = 2 automatic qualifiers
- (3) 9 or more teams = 3 automatic qualifiers
- (c) Conference tournament champions automatically qualify
- (1) If the regular season champion also wins the tournament, no additional berth will be awarded.
- (2) If a team other than the regular season champion wins the tournament, it will automatically qualify for the playoffs. The team will be seeded as an at-large berth in the playoffs unless already automatically qualified based upon their regular season conference finish.
- (d) Split conference application
- (1) The highest finishing team from a given classification will automatically qualify, regardless of overall conference finish.

- (2) Two teams that finish 1st and 2nd overall in the conference from the same classification will automatically qualify regardless of rule 4.1.18(b)(1-3).

NOTE: Ties for 1st place in the overall conference or for highest finisher in a classification must be broken using the established tie-breaking procedure [rule 4.1.13].

- (e) If too many teams qualify using the above criteria, adjustments to the established bracket size will be made to accommodate the automatic qualifiers.
- (f) If not enough teams qualify using the above criteria, the bracket will be filled by non-automatic qualifiers in that classification.
 - (1) Teams in their classification will be selected to fill the remaining slots in the bracket by comparing the highest finishing, non-automatic qualifying team in each conference based on adjusted MaxPreps ranking.

NOTE: Under no circumstances may a team "leap-frog" a higher finishing team in its own conference. For this procedure split conferences will have their classifications treated as separate entities.

4.1.19 Seeding:

- (a) Once the qualifying teams in each classification are determined, they will be divided into two regions of equal size (East and West) based on the longitude of each school.
- (b) The teams in each region will be seeded as follows:
 - (1) Seed all 1st place automatic berths by Adjusted MaxPreps ranking (or other NCHSAA selected ranking system); then
NOTE: The highest finishing team in its half of a split conference must finish in 1st, 2nd, or 3rd place overall and/or have an overall winning percentage of .500 or higher in order to be seeded as a #1. Otherwise, the team will be seeded with all other at-large teams.
 - (2) Seed all 2nd place automatic berths by Adjusted MaxPreps ranking (or other NCHSAA selected ranking system); then
 - (3) Seed all 3rd place automatic berths by Adjusted MaxPreps ranking (or other NCHSAA selected ranking system); then
 - (4) Seed all conference tournament champions and at-large berths by Adjusted MaxPreps ranking (or other NCHSAA selected ranking system).
- (c) Once seeding is complete:
 - (1) Existing byes will be awarded to the highest seeds possible.
 - (2) The higher seed is the home team unless otherwise determined by the NCHSAA.

4.1.20 Reporting Playoff Advancement:

- (a) After schools have qualified for the playoffs, it is their responsibility to report advancement by the appropriate method and deadline as designated by the NCHSAA.
- (b) Failure to report a playoff advancement will result in a \$400 fine to the school. Teams must report advancement no later than 6 a.m. the day following each win.
- (c) Postponements should also be reported.

4.1.21 Unpaid Fines: Schools that have unpaid fines to the NCHSAA are not eligible to compete in the playoffs for that sport (i.e. baseball fine would be specific to baseball playoffs) unless the fine is paid two (2) days prior to the reporting date for that sport. Any fine not paid at the end of the fiscal year (June 30) will carry over to the following school year making all teams at said school ineligible for the playoffs until the fine is paid in full.

4.1.22 Health and Safety Guidelines: Follow all applicable Health and Safety Guidelines (2.3), which includes:

- (a) Heat Illness Prevention and Management (2.3.2)
- (b) Heat Acclimatization (2.3.3)
- (c) Prevention of Heat Illness (2.3.4)
 - (1) WBGT and Heat Index Charts on page 37
- (d) Recognition of Heat Illness (2.3.5)
- (e) Management of Heat Illness (2.3.6)
- (f) Gfeller-Waller Concussion Awareness Act (2.3.7)
 - (1) Education, Plan, and Emergency Action Plan (2.3.7.c)
- (g) Cardiac Safety Program (2.3.8)
- (h) NFHS Guidelines for Handling Practices and Contests During Lightning or Thunder Disturbances (2.3.9)
- (i) Tobacco Products, Alcoholic Beverages and Controlled Substances (2.3.10)
- (j) Performance Enhancing Substances (2.3.11)
- (k) Infectious Disease Policy (2.3.12)
- (l) Catastrophic Insurance (2.3.13)
- (m) Student Accident Insurance and Athletic Coverage (2.3.14)
- (n) Hazing (2.3.15)

4.1.23 Body Paint: No face/body paint is allowed during regular season or playoffs.

- 4.1.24 **Noisemakers:** Any noise-making objects are prohibited at indoor contests (cheerleaders may use non-electronic hand megaphones).
- 4.1.25 **Filming, Videotaping or Video Streaming:** Filming, videotaping or video streaming of a contest or scrimmage by nonparticipating schools, in any sport, is considered unsportsmanlike conduct, subject to a \$400 fine, unless agreed upon by competing teams.
- (a) Filming, videotaping or video streaming for baseball and softball may not be done beyond either first base or third base.
- 4.1.26 **Clinic Dates:** For 2020-2021 NCHSAA Clinic Dates, see NCHSAA website.