

Massachusetts High School Football Coaches Association

Proposed 2023-2024 Playoff Modifications

The Current Format

8 Game Regular Season, 16 Team Post-Season & Consolation Games

- See the 2022 Football Format

Proposal for 2023-2024 Football Format

10 Game Regular Season, 8-Team Post-Season

- The dates and calendar of the pre-season will remain the same.
- The regular season will be 12 weeks concluding on Thanksgiving (Week 12).
- Schools can schedule up to 10 games including Thanksgiving during the regular season.
- Each school will be required to take two byes during the season. The first bye must be taken either week 4, 5, 6 or 7. The second bye must be either week 11 (week before Thanksgiving) or Week 12 (Thanksgiving week). Schools who do not play on Thanksgiving can schedule a game week 11. *Calendar on page 3*
- The MIAA Power Rating formula will determine the top 8 seeds per division. Only 64 schools (23% of the teams) will qualify for the post-season.
- Practices after Thanksgiving will be prohibited from having live contact.
- The quarterfinals will be on the Tuesday night following Thanksgiving (5 days later) The higher seeded school will host unless their field does not meet the established standards.
- The Semi-Finals will be played Sunday (5 days later) at a neutral site.
- The Super Bowl will be the following Saturday (6 Days) at a neutral site.

Rationale

- The plan aligns with the values of *Educational Athletics* and the *MIAA Tournament Philosophy* (page 108 of the MIAA Handbook). “Care must be taken to maintain the integrity and importance of regular season play so that the tournament will serve only as culminating athletic activity for those who have demonstrated a specific level of excellence during their regular season”.
- The plan will restore the integrity and importance of the regular season for all student-athletes by eliminating consolation games and by completing all league games before the post-season. Currently, football is the only MIAA sport that does not complete all league games prior to the start of the post-season.
- The plan aligns football with the standards set forth in the MIAA Tournament Management Committee’s *Statewide Tournament* proposal, approved February 28, 2020. Currently the “Path to Championship is Equal” and the “Same Format Used Across the State” are not being met. These points can only be met by completing all league games to provide a fair power rating prior to seeding.

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- The plan eliminates consolation games and puts the focus back on the student-athlete experience. Last season, 198 of the 277 football schools played at least one consolation game. A total of 162 consolation games were played and an estimated 30 other schools choose a bye instead of a consolation game. This plan shifts the emphasis back to the experience of all the student-athletes and building more interest in the game.
- The plan follows the normal athletic experience MIAA students are accustomed too, regular season followed by post-season, if you qualify. This removes the emotion letdown young athletes experience when their team either just misses or loses in the playoffs and must play more games.
- This is a proven post-season tournament format used in Connecticut (CIAC), who also plays on Thanksgiving, since 2010.
- The plan enhances the accuracy of the *MIAA Power Rating* formula by including 25% more games in the final rating.
- The plan allows schools to schedule non-league games to fit the level of the program.
- The plan creates early season opportunities for old rivalries to be renewed or for new regional rivalries to be developed as recommended in the Statewide Tournament.
- The plan will allow league games to be played toward the end of the season, thus keeping athletes engaged as the season develops.
- Thanksgiving will once again be the pinnacle of the season for all schools. It will also provide additional motivation for potential playoff teams and opponents of prospective playoff teams. Additionally, coaches will no longer have a reason to rest their best players with seeding on the line. This will also increase community interest and attendance.
- The two required bye weeks are safety measures to avoid over training and to provide additional recovery time for the student-athletes. The byes also provide extra time for player development, counseling, community service and team building.
- The plan allows schools to schedule all levels of the football program prior to the start of the season. Schools will no longer have to wait for the Sunday regional consolation meeting (weeks 9 & 10) to find out their next opponent and will not need to schedule different opponents for sub-varsity teams.
- The plan removes the administrative burden of hosting regional consolation meetings.
- The plan guarantees only the best teams will qualify for the post-season. Based off the current number of schools in each division, the top 19% to 28% of schools will qualify per division.
- Under no circumstance will a team with a losing record make it to the post-season.
- Half of the playoff qualifiers (32 Teams or 12% of the teams) will miss only two days of the Winter sport season.

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10 Game Regular Season
8-Team Post-Season Tournament

2023 Proposed Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Week 9			1	2	3	4
5 Week 10	6	7	8	9	10	11
12 Week 11 2 nd Bye Week	13	14	15	16	17	18
19 Week 12 2 nd Bye Week	20	21	22 Thanksgiving Eve	23 Thanksgiving Day (last possible game)	24	25
26 Week 13	27	28 Quarterfinals	29	30	December 1	2
3 Week 14 Semi-Finals	4	5	6	7	8	9 Super Bowls