

MIAA Football Committee  
Sub-Committee Working Document  
Proposed 2025-2026 Football Modifications

## **Executive Summary - MIAA Football 2025 Modifications**

The goal of these modifications is to provide an equitable regular season experience for all student-athletes in football and to offer a post-season tournament for those who have demonstrated a specific level of excellence.

### **Current Concerns with the In-Season Tournament**

- Having an in-season tournament contradicts several aspects of the MIAA Tournament Philosophy. The full philosophy is on page 4, highlights are below.
  - “A tournament is justifiable only when it produces worthwhile results for all involved.”
  - “Care must be taken to maintain the integrity and importance of the regular season play so that the tournament will serve only as a culminating athletic activity for those who have demonstrated a specific level excellence during their regular season.”
- The in-season tournament format is inconsistent with other MIAA tournaments.
- The in-season tournament requires 76% (210 of 274) of the schools to alter their schedule in November by playing consolation games and/or not playing (bye-week), so other schools can participate in the tournament.
- Beginning the tournament in November creates inequitable experience for student-athletes, either welcome to the tournament or relegation to consolation games and/or bye-weeks.
- The 8-week qualifying period limits flexibility to schedule additional opponents to build a tournament worthy power rating.
- The opportunity to qualify for the tournament is inconsistent, as the number of teams per division currently ranges from 22 to 48.
- Determining the final power ratings before completing all league games, with many played on Thanksgiving, creates an imbalance, and makes it impossible to accurately seed the tournament.

### **Supporting Statistical Data from 2021-2023 16-Team Tournaments**

- Higher Seeds have won 166 of 192 (86.5%) first round games.
- In the past three seasons, 64 of 192 (34.4%) of teams seeded 9 through 16 have entered the tournament without a winning record. This number would be higher if we did not have the rule that requires teams to have 3 wins to be tournament eligible.
- Playing two or three extra games before the seeding provides at least 25% more opportunities for teams to build a power rating.

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**Proposed Amendments for 2025-2026 Football Format**

**Full Regular Season, 8-Team Post-Season Tournament**

- The pre-season will follow the established calendar.
- The regular season calendar will remain the same.
- Schools can schedule up to 11 games including Thanksgiving during the regular season.
- Schools must play a minimum of 9 games to be playoff eligible.
- Schools can only play once during calendar week 11 (week before Thanksgiving) or week 12 (Thanksgiving week). See *Calendar* on page 5.
- Thanksgiving will be the cut-off date for the tournament.
- The MIAA Power Rating formula will seed the tournament.
- The top 8 schools per division will qualify for the post-season.
- Practices after Thanksgiving will be prohibited from having live contact.
- The Quarterfinals will be on the Tuesday night after Thanksgiving. The higher seeded school will host unless their field does not meet the established standards.
- The Semi-Finals will be played Sunday, five days later, at a neutral site.
- The Super Bowls will be the following Saturday, six days later, at a neutral site.

**Recommendation for Equal Path**

- Limit each division to a maximum of 40 teams. This will ensure the top 20% of schools in each division will qualify for the tournament.

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**Supporting Rationale**

- Maintains the integrity and importance of the regular season.
- Provides an equitable experience for all student-athletes in football by eliminating consolation and by-weeks.
- Aligns the football format with other MIAA team sport tournaments.
- The tournament will serve only as culminating athletic activity for those who have demonstrated a specific level of excellence during their regular season.
- The required open date in either week 11 or 12 provides additional recovery time before Thanksgiving and the tournament.
- Provides added flexibility for schools to schedule non-league games to fit the goals of the program.
- Creates additional opportunities for new regional rivalries to be developed as recommended in the Statewide Tournament Plan.
- Enhances the accuracy of the seeding by completing all league/rivalry games prior to seeding.
- Provides an additional 2 or 3 games to build your power rating.
- Follows a proven format Connecticut, who also plays on Thanksgiving, has used since 2012.
- Allows league and rivalry games to be played toward the end of the season, thus keeping athletes engaged as the season develops.
- Allows Thanksgiving to once again be the pinnacle of the season for all schools. It will provide additional motivation for potential playoff teams, opponents of prospective playoff teams, and the communities of these schools.
- Eliminates the conflict teams in the state finals face about resting their varsity players on Thanksgiving.
- Allows schools to schedule all levels of the football program prior to the season.
- Removes the administrative burden of hosting regional consolation meetings.
- Teams will likely need a winning record to qualify for the tournament.
- Half of the playoff qualifiers (32 Teams) will be eliminated on the Tuesday after Thanksgiving.

**Drawbacks**

- Only eight teams (50% less) will qualify for the tournament in each division, 64 total.
- The 16 teams (5.8% of the schools who play football) who reach the State Final will miss an additional week of the winter season.

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MIAA Handbook July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2025

## **PART IX: TOURNAMENTS**

### **93. MIAA Tournament Philosophy**

The MIAA strongly supports the commitment to interscholastic athletic programs as an essential educational opportunity for students. Young people develop physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially through voluntary participation in properly conducted athletic programs, including tournaments. The development of self-image, character, stamina, physical skills, achievement, self-discipline, and the desire to excel are all advantages associated with high school sport participation.

The educational value of tournaments has long been recognized by secondary school educators. High school tournaments are conducted in all 50 states in widely different sports for teams and individuals, and for all student-athletes. Enthusiasm for tournaments extends beyond those student-athletes who qualify for these championship activities. Tournament excitement is often a focal point for school-community cohesiveness. For the participants, tournaments provide for an intensity in preparation and a greater level of skill attainment which causes, even beyond the high school years, a better capacity for facing adversity, discouragement, and the vicissitudes of life.

The purpose of tournaments is to permit qualifying schools and individuals who represent that school team and who have achieved an established standard of excellence during that sport season to compete in championship tournaments. Tournaments demonstrate success and should serve as an incentive for others. They should provide students and spectators an opportunity, under competitive conditions, to develop desirable character traits.

Tournaments have the potential to inspire maximum performance, provide quality competition, afford high visibility for all concerned, and foster personal development.

All tournaments must be carefully planned and controlled. A tournament is justifiable only when it produces worthwhile results for all involved. Schools, teams, coaches, and spectators must display good sportsmanship in winning or losing. Negative behavior must not be tolerated.

Care must be taken to maintain the integrity and importance of regular season play so that the tournament will serve only as a culminating athletic activity for those who have demonstrated a specific level of excellence during their regular season.

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2025 Proposed Calendar  
 8-Team Post-Season Tournament

November/December

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>Week 9</b> 2	3	4	5	6	7 <b>Game Weekend</b>	8
<b>Week 10</b> 9	10	11	12	13	14 <b>Game Weekend</b>	15
<b>Week 11</b> 16	17	18	19	20	21 <b>Game or Bye week if playing 11/27</b>	22
<b>Week 12</b> 23	24	25	26	27 <b>Thanksgiving Day (end of regular season)</b>	28	29
<b>Week 13</b> 30	<b>December</b> 1	2 <b>Quarterfinals</b>	3	4	5	6
<b>Week 14</b> <b>Semi-Finals</b> 7	8	9	10	11	12	13 <b>Super Bowls</b>