

MID PENN FOOTBALL GUIDELINES

I. Length of Contest

	Periods	Length of Period
Varsity	4	12 minutes
Junior Varsity	4	10 minutes
9 th Grade	4	10 minutes
8 th Grade	4	8 minutes

II. Uniforms

- Uniforms are to conform to National Federation rules or as amended by the PIAA

	Home	Visitors
Varsity	Dark	Light
Junior Varsity	Light	Dark
9 th Grade/8 th Grade	Dark	Light

If there is a problem/discrepancy the home team is responsible to wear their required color by rule.

III. Participation

- All participating schools must abide by the eligibility rules as stated in the PIAA Constitution and the Mid Penn Constitution and By-Laws

IV. Officials

- The Mid Penn Assignor will assign PIAA approved officials for all contests at all levels. The following officials are required, at a minimum:

	# Officials	
Varsity	5	** Chain Crew is available for assignment
Junior Varsity	4	
9 th Grade/8 th Grade	4	

** Chain Crew – The Mid Penn Conference Assignor may schedule chain crews as determined by the conference schools as they are required by them. Conference schools, at their discretion, may appoint and use substitute adults with high integrity and knowledge of the game for chain crew positions at the approval of the official in charge for that game.

Suggested days and times for contests

	DAY	NIGHT TIME	DAY TIME
Varsity	Thursday/Friday/Saturday	7:00 pm	1:30 pm
Junior Varsity	Saturday		11:00 am
Junior Varsity	Monday	6:00 pm	3:45 pm
9 th Grade	Wednesday	6:00 pm	3:45 pm
8 th Grade	Thursday	6:00 pm	3:45 pm

V. Game Operations

- Home team management must designate the end of field for team warm ups. Teams will warm up from the 45 yard line towards the end line at their designated end. This practice is to be followed for any warm up activities prior to the start of the first and second half kick-offs. No “unsportsmanlike” acts will be tolerated.
- The officials will arrive for a varsity game 1 and 1/2 hours prior to kickoff. Referees will let the home Athletic Director or Game Manager know when the crew of officials has arrived. The Referee will confirm the starting time and ask if there are any events scheduled prior to the game or during half time. The Referee will confirm the length of the half time and will ensure that the visiting team is made aware of all of this information. The Referee and Umpire will meet with the Home Team Head Coach, on the field, 45 minutes prior to kick-off. Meeting should take no longer than 5 minutes. Referee and Umpire will then meet with the Visiting Team Head Coach, on the field, at 35 minutes prior to kick-off. Meeting should take no longer than 5 minutes. During the meeting with the coaches, the Referee and Umpire will synchronize the time with both coaches and let them know when the Back Judge and Umpire will come for their respective teams prior to start the game and at half time.
- Clock operators should visit the locker room at least 1 hour prior to the scheduled kickoff time to discuss any game timing situations with the officiating crew, the scheduled kickoff time and should synchronize the time with the officials. The clock operators, upon arrival at the press box, should put up on the game clock the number of minutes remaining to the scheduled kickoff time and allow it to run down. The National Federation requires a three-minute mandatory warm-up period be posted on the game clock for use by coaches immediately after the halftime intermission expires. Upon conclusion of this three minute period both teams and officials will proceed to their second half kick positions.

- **Coin Toss** – Games shall begin with a coin toss at the following time:

Varsity	20 minutes before game time at midfield. Both head coaches and no more than 4 team captains, in uniform, must be present at the coin toss. Both teams should clear the field 25 minutes prior to game time. At 3 minutes prior to Kick Off, the ceremonial coin toss will be held at mid-field with the Referee and Umpire and no more than 4 team captains (in uniform). During this time, all other team members and staff must be completely off the playing field –
Junior Varsity	Prior to start of the game
9 th Grade/8 th Grade	Prior to start of the game

- **Pre-Game** – The teams re-enter the field 8 (eight) minutes before the scheduled start time. National Anthem and Alma Mater should be played no later than six (6) minutes prior to kick-off by the home team. If there are any problems, the home team is responsible, by rule, to enter first onto the field.
- **Half-time** – Will be fifteen (15) minutes long or up to twenty (20) minutes as designated by home team management for special circumstances. This information will be transmitted to the official in charge as well as the opposing team by home team management. Half-times may be lengthened to a maximum of twenty (20) minutes for special events, i.e., Homecoming and Parents Night and it is the responsibility of home team management to notify the game officials as well as the opposing team’s AD and/or coach prior to the game for the extended time period. Home team management is responsible to get the second half started on time.
- **Medical Coverage** – The host school is responsible for providing ambulance service. Any school whose athletes use the service is responsible for any charges incurred. An ambulance must be available for all Varsity, Junior Varsity, 9th Grade and 8th Grade games. The host school must provide a doctor for all Varsity games.

- **Game Time Spotting and Scouting** – The host school should reserve an area for up to four (4) coaches from the opposing team for the purpose of scouting and spotting during the game. This area can be in a press box or in the stands and should be similar to that area provided for home team coaches. Schools that use end zone cameras should contact the host school 2-3 days before the game to make arrangements.
- **Scouting/Video Exchange**
 - Arrangements are to be made with schools. Issues or concerns should be shared to Athletic Director and worked out by administration.
 - Recommended practice for exchanging video is Hudl
- **Band Guidelines**
 - Any changes in pre-game or half-time performances, such as home school band performing at half-time must be mutually agreed upon by Tuesday of the game week.
 - Bands are requested not to play while the ball is in play.
 - **Pre-Game Ceremonies** should take place twenty (20) minutes before game time; the home team band will immediately take the field for whatever pre-game activity is to be performed.
 - **Half-Time** – The visiting band leaves the stands five (5) minutes before the end of the first half. As soon as the field is clear of players at half-time, the visiting band will perform for not more than twelve (12) minutes. Home team management is responsible for this duty and clearing of the field so the second half starts on time.

VI. FOOTBALL PRE-SEASON HEAT-ACCLIMATIZATION GUIDELINES

Practice or competition in hot and/or humid environmental conditions poses special problems for student-athletes. Heat illness is a primary concern in these conditions. Having a scripted practice plan with breaks from activity as well as scheduled hydration and cooling off periods will be of great assistance in preparing student-athletes for the football season.

Core Principles:

1. Acclimatization Period: All schools sponsoring high school football are recommended to institute the heat acclimatization program on Monday or Tuesday (**August 5 or 6, 2024**) for 5 consecutive days prior to the Monday starting date (**August 12, 2024**) for the 2024 football season. If a school opts to institute heat acclimatization during this period, the intent is to have all members of the team be present and participate in all 5 consecutive days of the heat acclimatization period, but minimally, a player must be present for 3 consecutive days of these first 5 days of heat acclimatization to satisfy the requirement. A school must have 5 consecutive days of heat acclimatization prior to their first contact drills and contact drills may not be initiated before Monday, **August 12, 2024** (the first legal practice date of fall sports).

The practices for this week are limited to a 5-3-5-3-5 hours of practice daily for the 5 days of heat acclimatization. Practice sessions may be no longer than 3 hours in length and teams must have 2 hours of rest (recovery period) between sessions. Days 1,3 and 5 are limited to 5 hours per day and Days 2 and 4 are limited to 3 hours per day.

Helmets and shoulder pads with shorts are permitted the first 5 days of heat acclimatization. Full gear and contact may not be worn until Monday, **August 12th** after the completion of the five consecutive day heat acclimatization period.

If a school starts heat acclimatization on Monday, **August 5th**, if they choose, they may practice on Saturday, **August 10th**, but there may be no contact on this day the same as the previous 5 days of heat acclimatization since it is prior to the first contact day of Monday, **August 12th**. If a school starts heat acclimatization on Tuesday, **August 6th**, then Saturday **August 10th** is their 5th consecutive day of heat acclimatization and no contact is permitted.

If a school starts heat acclimatization on the first practice day, Monday, **August 12th**, they must have 5 consecutive days of heat acclimatization with helmets, shoulder pads, shorts, prior to their first legal practice with contact. If starting on **August 12th**, a school must have 5 heat acclimatization days, plus

the 5 regular practice days (where contact and full gear is permitted) before their first scrimmage. If they are scheduled to play on the first play date of the fall season, this schedule may limit them to only 1 scrimmage. Schools are advised to be cautious in scheduling a second scrimmage if starting heat acclimatization on **August 12th**.

□ The only exception to the first legal play date for football is those schools who are playing Week Zero by trading a scrimmage for their first regularly scheduled contest. That varsity team may play the optional weekend of **August 23 & 24** with junior varsity competition to follow.

2. **Scrimmages:** A team shall not participate in a scrimmage prior to the first available scrimmage date as provided in

Article XVI: Season and Out-of-Season Rules and Regulations of the PIAA By-Laws.

3. **Participation Limitation:** No Team, no individual member or members of such Team, and no individual representing any PIAA member school, may Practice or participate in an Inter-School Practice, Scrimmage, Contest, and/or Open Gym on more than six days in any Calendar Week during the Regular Season.

4. **Out-of-Season Activities:** General conditioning provides only partial heat acclimatization. Therefore, student athletes should be exposed gradually to hot and/or humid environmental conditions to provide better heat acclimatization. Each exposure also should involve a gradual increase in the amount of exercise that is undertaken over a period of days to weeks until the exercise intensity and duration is comparable to that likely to occur in competition. If conditions are extreme, training or competition should be held during a cooler time of the day.

□ When protective gear and clothing is authorized by the school Principal outside of the defined season, frequent rest periods should be scheduled so that the gear and clothing can be loosened to allow evaporation of sweat and other forms of heat loss. During the acclimatization process, it may be advisable to use a minimum of protective gear and clothing and to Practice in T-shirts, shorts, socks and shoes. Excessive tape and outer clothing that restrict sweat evaporation should be avoided. Rubberized suits should never be used.

Maximum Practice Time: The maximum allotted time per day for practice is 5 hours and teams must have 2 hours of rest between sessions.

Minimum Practice Time: The minimum practice time for the first five days is 3 hours per day.

Practice: The time a player engages in physical activity. It is defined that any practice session be no greater than three (3) hours in length. Warm-up, stretching, conditioning, weight training and ‘cool-down’ periods are all considered practice.

Recovery Period: A minimum of a two (2) hour recovery period must be provided after any session.

Walk-through: No protective equipment or strenuous activity permitted. Only balls and field markers (cones) may be used.

Prevention of Heat Illness from the Sport Medicine Guidelines of the PIAA Handbook should be observed. These include regular measurements of environmental conditions. See Sports Medicine Guidelines for more detail or consult with your athletic trainer and/or team physician.

VII. PIAA Regular Season Football Regulations – Contact

- During the regular season and post season, no football player is allowed to participate in more than **ninety (90) minutes** of full contact practice per week. For the purposes of the rule, “full contact” is defined as football drills or live game simulations where “live action” occurs. Live action, as defined by USA Football, is contact at game speed where players execute full tackles at a competitive pace taking players to the ground.
- A team may continue to dress in full pads for practice, but may only participate in live action drills and game time simulations **no more than ninety (90) minutes per athlete per week**.
- It is assumed that when players are in shells (shorts, shoulder pads, and helmets) no live action drills or simulations will occur. This rule is intended to limit live action drills and simulations and not the number of practices a team may participate in full pads.
- A team may participate in “air”, “bags”, “wrap”, and “thud” drills and simulations at any point. These contact levels are defined below:

- Air – Players should run unopposed without bags or any opposition.
- Bags – Activity is executed against a bag, shield or pad to allow for a soft-contact surface, with or without the resistance of a teammate or coach standing behind the bag.
- Wrap – Drills run at full speed until contact, which is above the waist with the players remaining on their feet.
- Thud – Same as wrap but tempo is competitive with no pre-determined winner and the players are not tackling to the ground.

VIII. Guidelines for Handling Contests During Lightning Disturbances

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide a default policy to those responsible for making decisions concerning the suspension and restarting of contests based on the presence of lightning. The preferred sources from which to request such a policy for your facility would include your state high school association and the nearest office of the National Weather Service.

Proactive Planning

- A. Assign staff to monitor local weather conditions before and during events.
- B. Develop an evacuation plan, including identification of appropriate nearby shelters.
- C. Develop criteria for suspension and resumption of play:
 1. When thunder is heard, or a cloud-to-ground lightning bolt is seen the thunderstorm is close enough to strike your location with lightning. Suspend play and take shelter immediately.
 2. Thirty-minute rule. Once play has been suspended, wait at least 30 minutes after the last thunder is heard or flash of lightning is witnessed prior to resuming play.
 3. Any subsequent thunder or lightning after the beginning of the 30 minute count, reset the clock and another 30-minute count should begin.
- D. Hold periodic reviews with appropriate personnel.

For more detailed information, refer to the “Guidelines for Lightning Safety” contained in the NFSH Sports Medicine Handbook.

IX. Postponement of Contests

- A. Notification by the home team for postponement, due to inclement weather, should be made if possible four (4) hours prior to game time.
- B. Notification by either team for postponement due to school, community, state or national events should be done in a timely manner. The assignor of officials should also be notified of such cancellation or change.

X. Divisional Champions

- A. Divisional Champions will be determined by win/loss record. Three points for a win; one point for a tie; and 0 points for a loss will be awarded in divisional competition only. If there is a tie, then Co-Champions will be named.
- B. To be eligible for a Championship, a team must play all their division games.

XI. Determining entries into the District III Tournament

- A. District III will use a Power Rating System to determine entries into the tournament.

XII. Reporting Results to the Media

- A. The Home Team should report results to the news media, both written and electronic. It would be helpful if every home school contacted the Patriot-News, Harrisburg or PennLive.com.
- B. It is by PIAA resolve that no discussion of rules interpretation and enforcement of rules from the game be discussed at this time.

XIII. All-star Selection Process

- A. Coaches meeting will be held at the end of the season to select only a first and second team all star unit per division.

XIV PIAA SUB-VARSITY FOOTBALL RULES MODIFICATIONS

(JUNIOR VARSITY OR JUNIOR HIGH/MIDDLE SCHOOL)

The purpose of this modification for sub-varsity level contests is to create opportunities for student-athletes to participate in a modified contest or controlled scrimmage setting. The modifications permit contests to be played with kicking modifications or plays from scrimmage (10 and 10), and allow some flexibility for coaches to have a less formal structure than an event contested under NFHS Football Rules. PIAA views this as a true learning and teaching opportunity at the sub-varsity level.

Mutual agreement to use the following NFHS kicking rules deviations or scrimmage opportunity at the sub-varsity level is required of the participating schools prior to the event. Failure of mutual agreement prior to the event results in the contest being played under NFHS rules. If modifications are agreed upon for the kicking game modifications outlined below, they apply to both kickoffs and punts. Once an option is selected it cannot be modified during the game for any reason. It is recommended that these modifications be discussed and agreed upon by Athletic Directors and coaches well before game time, preferably in the week leading up to the game, and shared with the registered officials in advance of the event.

At the sub-varsity level in the sport of football, a team may participate in a maximum number of 2 scrimmages and 10 Contests, or a combination of 12 Scrimmages and/or Contests.

Administration:

At the sub-varsity level, schools may mutually agree to hold an athletic event under the following three (3) conditions:

1. Play the event pursuant to NFHS Football Rules;
2. Play the event pursuant to NFHS Football Rules and agree to utilize the kicking game modifications below; or
3. Play the contest as a scrimmage utilizing the scrimmage modifications detailed below.

Regardless of the method determined to play the event, PIAA-Registered officials must be present to conduct the event during the defined-regular season. Assigning of officials and payment of officials fees are to be agreed upon by the school and/or league and the registered official.

Any Coach and/or contestant who, while Coaching or competing for a PIAA member school during the defined Regular Season dates for football, is disqualified for unsportsmanlike conduct or flagrant misconduct, shall be subject to the disqualification provisions under Article XIII Penalties, Section 8, of the PIAA By-Laws.

KICKING GAME MODIFICATIONS

Kickoff Modifications

- Options for the team that wins the coin toss will be to defer choices **OR** choose to go on either offense or defense **OR** choose the goal that team will defend. The team on offense will start 1st and 10 at their 35-yard line anywhere between the hash marks. The game clock will start on the snap.
- Following a score, the non-scoring team will put the ball in play 1st and 10 at their 35-yard line after their opponents PAT. The ball will be placed on the 35-yard line anywhere between the hash marks. The game clock will start on the snap.
- Following a safety, the ball will be placed on the Team B 45-yard line, 35 yards from the Team A 20-yard line, anywhere between the hash marks. The game clock will start on the snap.
- Following a touchback, the ball will be placed on the Team B 20-yard line anywhere between the hash marks. The game clock will start on the snap.

Punt Modifications

- The receiving team will put the ball in play 1st and 10 at the succeeding spot 35-yards from the previous spot anywhere between the hash marks. If the previous spot is on or inside the Team A 45-yard line, the ball will be placed at the Team B 20-yard line. The game clock will start on the snap

Note: Field goal attempts and PAT's by placekick will be conducted under NFHS Football Rules in all situations.

SCRIMMAGE MODIFICATIONS

Modified football should be administered so that all safety precautions are in effect.

Conditions of Play:

- Maximum time of 90 minutes;
- Play will be conducted in 11 v 11;
- All NFHS and relevant PIAA football rules modifications must be followed in regard to playing rules, equipment etc.;
- Each team will run 10 plays and then alternate. Down and distance situations may be used but must occur within the 10-play limit. The total number of plays shall not exceed maximum of 80 live contact plays during the entire scrimmage or a time limit of 90 minutes;
- No score shall be kept;
- Kick-offs will not be utilized, play will start on the 25-yard line;
- Timeouts and stoppages of play are permitted and encouraged for the purpose of both providing instruction and adequate rest period;
- Punts and extra point attempts may involve live play until the ball is kicked. Punts may not be advanced and all fumbled punts and muffs will be blown dead immediately;
- On offense, one team starts and has ten plays starting from their own 25-yard line. They will get ten plays in a row. If they score, the ball comes back to the 25- yard line until their ten plays are exhausted;
- The down is over if the defensive team gains possession of the ball; and
- After Team "A" completes their 10 plays, Team "B" will have ten offensive plays. This continues until each team has had 40 offensive plays. Teams may elect to run fewer than 40 offensive plays if agreed upon by both head coaches;

Officials

- The scoreboard may be used for time purposes only-no score is to be kept;
- Administer penalties without delay, there is no need to waste time consulting the offended team; simply administer the penalty;
- When an official throws a flag during live play and a penalty is assessed, the play still counts as one of the plays for that sequence in the scrimmage;
- Coaches are responsible for tracking the maximum number of plays to be run;
- Downs and distance may be kept. However, they are not required. The referee's judgment on first downs will be accepted;
- The officials are responsible for enforcing the scrimmage rules. Coaches do not have the authority to supersede the officials' decisions on any aspect of the scrimmage;
- A scrimmage may be ended early upon a team's request. The opposing team must honor the request;
- Situation play can be requested by any team, but both teams and the referee must agree;

There is a 40 offensive play MAXIMUM allotted for each team conducted in the following manner.

10 Plays Team A -25 Yard Line

10 Plays Team B -25 Yard Line

**Optional 2 minute Break

10 Plays Team A -25 Yard Line

10 Plays Team B -25 Yard Line

5 Minute Break

3 Minute Mandatory Warm-Up Period

10 Plays Team A -25 Yard Line

10 Plays Team B -25 Yard Line

**Optional 2 minute break

10 Plays Team A -25 Yard Line

10 Plays Team B -25 Yard Line

Maximum Total Time for Scrimmage: 90 minutes including warm-up & breaks. 90 minutes includes the 40 offensive play maximum per team.

Officials

Requests for **NON PREFERRED** status of a PIAA Official must be sent to the MPC contracted **SPORT SPECIFIC ASSIGNOR** by the athletic director. Coaches are prohibited from contacting officials directly. **(MPC adopted protocol must be followed by athletic director)**

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