

Big Ten Middle School Football League By-Laws



1st Amendment: March 2023

2nd Amendment: May 2026

SECTION I: Mission Statement

The Big Ten Middle School Football League is composed of seven current member schools and exists to ensure that each participating player learns the fundamentals of football, along with the associated character skills, in a competitive environment.

This includes:

- Coaching basic football techniques at every skill level
- Teaching players to appreciate the values and benefits of the game both on and off the field

The league supports and promotes:

- Opportunities for each player to experience success and skill development *in a game environment*.
- Honesty, integrity, fair play, and good sportsmanship.

Purpose:

- 7th and 8th grade football should exist as a 'feeder program' for each school's respective high school program.
 - The Big Ten is a balance of player development and competitive game play. While competition is important, the goal is not a "win at all costs" approach.
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SECTION II: Eligibility

All head coaches are responsible for ensuring that players meet eligibility requirements.

Requirements:

- **Academics:** players meet the requirements set forth by the member team.
 - **Age:** Must not turn 15 before September 1
 - Each community must monitor and enforce this for their own program.
 - Players must be enrolled in 7th or 8th grade
 - Exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis for younger players as approved by the individual school and program involved.
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Rosters

- No limit to the number of players per team
 - Each program must submit a roster to the league president by Monday of the first game week; roster must include full name and grade level in school.
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Playing Time

- Goal: every player on each team will contribute in every game. By way of providing direction on behalf of the Big Ten, it is our belief that:
 - Every player should play in each half of football throughout the season.
 - Players who are in good standing with their team deserve the chance to play in game competition.
 - Player development and experience should be prioritized over the circumstances or result of the game.
 - Potential exceptions for coaches to consider:
 - Disciplinary action / consequences (practice attendance, coach discretion)
 - Player refuses or is reluctant to play in game
 - In the instance of choosing to not play a player - communication to parents is strongly advised prior to the start of the game
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Registration

- Registration dates are determined by individual member schools
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Addition or Deletion of Teams

- Teams may be added or removed by 66% vote at league meetings
 - Teams must give **one year notice** before leaving the league
 - Teams who wish to join the Big Ten must:
 - Communicate with / express interest in joining to one of the current league directors or programs.
 - Complete the Big Ten “Incoming Program Questionnaire”
 - Be approved by a 66% vote of league directors
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Probation

- Member schools may be placed on probation (1–3 years) by 66% vote.
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Emergency Actions

- League decisions may be made via telephone / email poll with majority approval
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SECTION IV: Coaches & League Personnel

Head Coach

- Appointed by the high school head football coach, athletic director, youth football board, or administrative governing entity.
- Each community holds one vote in league decisions.

Assistant Coaches

- Selected by the school or athletic leadership
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Meetings

- **Pre/Post Season:** 1) Late April / May (in-person) 2) Late July / Early August (virtual -> review schedule) 3) Early November (virtual -> wrap up)
- **Special Meetings:** Called as needed

Attendance Policy:

- Missing a meeting → probation
 - Continued absences → potential removal from league
 - To remove probation → attend 3 consecutive meetings
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Fields

- Schools must submit home field availability to league president by mid-late May
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Schedule

- Created by league president
 - Goal: schedule release before school is out in late May. If not ready by then -> early-mid June.
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School Responsibilities

- Coordinate with school officials to ensure games occur
 - League members will work closely with school officials on game dates to assure league games are played. Where fields may be lost due to unexpected bad weather or other unforeseen problems, cancellations must be made via member schools. Follow-up communications to game officials and opposing schools must be done by the home team.
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SECTION V: Rules of Play

Games

- 6-game schedule (league opponents only)
- PLUS 2 optional additional scrimmages (not within 36 hours of a game)
 - 1 pre-season scrimmage, to be organized by each school and/or the Big Ten

- 1 in-season scrimmage with a school from the River Cities Alliance Conference, as scheduled by the Big Ten.
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Game Format

Games will follow NFHS high school football rules with the following exceptions

- **Quarters:** 4 × 8 minutes (MHSAA timing rules)
 - **Overtime:** None
 - **Halftime:** 8 minutes
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Scoring

- Kick PAT = 2 points
 - Run/Pass PAT = 1 point
 - Touchdown = 6 points
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Ball Size

- 7th Grade → Youth Size ball (size 7)
 - 8th Grade → Regulation ball (MHSAA regulation size high school football)
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Game Time Goals

- Single game: 6:30 PM
 - Doubleheader:
 - Game 1: 5:00 PM
 - Game 2: 15 minutes after
 - Times are subject to change pending the availability of the host-team's stadium
 - Scores must be entered on Big Ten league reporting sheet (by home team) by Noon the following business day
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Game Days

- Wednesday evenings

- Tuesday or Monday allowed if both teams agree and needed per stadium availability
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Scheduling Rules

- No make-up games
 - May relocate game site if needed
 - Must be played on original date
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Bad Weather

- Games not started → canceled (no reschedule)
- Suspended games:
 - If game is called at half time or later, the results count as an official game
 - If game is called before half time, game is over with no winner or loser

Officials Control:

- Referee may delay or suspend play
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Game Call-Off

- Must be called by **4:00 PM**
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Filming

- Teams may film practices and games
 - Film exchange optional (arranged by head coaches)
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Defensive Rule

- No contact with long snapper during kicks (PAT, FG, or punt); no contact allowed until snapper has both lifted his head and begun running.
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Rosters

- Schools desiring to field two teams at any grade level must alert the league at or prior to the first pre-season meeting to allow advanced notice for scheduling. Program requests to field 2 teams at a grade-level will be decided by a majority vote.
 - Schools with two teams must maintain separate rosters for the entire season. Any roster changes between teams after the first game must be communicated and approved.
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Player Misconduct

- Ejection → suspended next game
 - Follow MHSAA guidelines for player in-game conduct
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SECTION VI: Equipment

Player Equipment

- Must meet NFHS standards; coaches responsible to ensure proper and safe equipment.

Field Equipment

- Must meet NFHS standards
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SECTION VII: Game Field

Home Team Responsibilities

- Goal: Field available 30 minutes prior; warm-ups may need to be flexible pending field availability.
- If game field is not available for warm up, alternate warm-up location should be provided.

Game Management Includes:

- Chain crew (age 15+)
- Scoreboard operator
- Announcer

- Athletic trainer preferred (ambulance presence ideal at minimum)
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SECTION VIII: Game Officials

- Must be MHSAA registered
- Host school secures officials

Fees

- Determined by Arbiter and Brad Brunet
- Price for a 4-man crew in 2025 was \$256

Crew Requirements

- Minimum 3 officials unless agreed otherwise

Referee Authority

- Controls game from arrival to completion; only the referee can call or suspend a game once it has begun.
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SECTION IX: League Organization

- Each school must have a primary representative (director)
 - Max league size: 14 teams
 - Waiting list maintained for new schools
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Voting

- By-law changes require:
 - Motion + second
 - Majority or 66% vote, pending the item
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SECTION X: Season

- The first eligible practice date will be set to allow for the required number of practices needed prior to the first game.
 - Practice progression:
 1. First 2 practices: No pads
 2. Next 2: Shoulder pads only
 3. 5th practice: Full pads
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APPENDIX: Equity in Scheduling

- Scheduling will follow a good-faith effort to get each team equal home games. Field and schedule availability will determine the realities of the final schedule. Take out everything below?
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