



NATIONAL FEDERATION OF MIDDLE SCHOOL SPORTS

OFFICIAL RULEBOOK

2026 – 2027 Competition Season • All 15 Sanctioned Sports

*Governing rules for interscholastic athletic competition in grades 6–8,
from local competition to the NFMSS national championship pathway.*

Dorian Williams, Founder & Chief Executive Officer

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Authority & Scope

1. These rules are adopted and published by the National Federation of Middle School Sports (NFMSS®) and govern all NFMSS-sanctioned competition among member schools in grades 6–8.
2. Where a state association affiliated with NFMSS adopts a permitted modification identified in these rules (“by state adoption”), that modification applies within the state; national championship events use the base rule unless the championship manual states otherwise.
3. The NFMSS Rules Committee publishes annual interpretations in the NFMSS Case Book. Interpretations of the national office are final.
4. Member schools, coaches, officials, athletes, and spectators agree to these rules as a condition of participation.

Student-Athlete Eligibility

1. A participant must be a bona fide student enrolled in grades 6–8 at the member school, attending at least half of the instructional day.
2. Academic standard: athletes must pass at least 70% of enrolled courses in the prior grading period; schools may adopt stricter standards.
3. Age rule: a student who turns 15 before September 1 of the school year is ineligible for NFMSS competition. State affiliates may adopt a stricter age line.
4. A student has 3 consecutive years of middle school eligibility beginning with initial 6th-grade enrollment.
5. Transfers: a student transferring without a corresponding change of residence is ineligible for varsity-level NFMSS championship play for 30 calendar days unless a hardship waiver is granted by the state coordinator.
6. Each athlete must have on file: a current pre-participation physical examination, signed parent/guardian consent, concussion information acknowledgment, and emergency medical information.

Coaching Requirements

1. Every head coach and paid assistant must hold current NFMSS coaching certification, renewed annually, which includes: rules & sportsmanship, concussion recognition, heat & hydration, sudden cardiac arrest awareness, and safeguarding of minors.
2. All coaches and program volunteers must pass a national criminal background check every 2 years, administered through the member school or NFMSS partner service.
3. At least one person certified in CPR/AED and first aid must be present at every practice and contest.

Health & Safety Protocols (Mandatory)

1. Concussion: any athlete exhibiting signs or symptoms of a concussion is removed immediately and may not return the same day. Return to play requires written clearance from a licensed medical professional and completion of the NFMSS graduated return-to-play progression (minimum 5 days).
2. Heat: NFMSS publishes wet-bulb globe temperature (WBGT) thresholds annually. Above the caution threshold, mandatory rest/water breaks apply; above the maximum threshold, outdoor activity is suspended or moved.
3. Lightning: activity is suspended at the first observed lightning or thunder and may not resume until 30 minutes after the last occurrence.

4. Emergency Action Plan: every member school files a venue-specific EAP (AED location, EMS access point, responsible personnel) with its NFMSS state coordinator before the first home contest.
5. AED access within 3 minutes is required at all NFMSS contests.

Sportsmanship & Conduct

1. Ejection of any athlete or coach carries a minimum one-contest suspension (next scheduled contest) plus any sport-specific penalty; a second ejection in the same season carries a two-contest suspension and NFMSS review.
2. Coaches are responsible for team-area and spectator conduct; hosts must provide event management adequate to enforce spectator standards.
3. Hazing, harassment, taunting of opponents, and abuse of officials are prohibited and subject to NFMSS disciplinary procedures, up to program suspension.
4. Social-media conduct directed at officials, opponents, or students that violates NFMSS standards is subject to review.

Officials

1. All officials must register with NFMSS in each sport officiated, pass the annual rules examination, and complete safeguarding training.
2. Officials' jurisdiction begins upon arrival at the site and ends when they leave the site; post-contest reports for ejections and serious incidents are due within 24 hours.

Seasons, Practice & Contest Limits

1. A minimum of 10 practice days is required before an athlete's first contest in contact/collision sports (football, wrestling, lacrosse) and 7 days in all other sports.
2. Practices are limited to 2 hours of on-field/court time per day at the middle school level; multi-sport athletes may not exceed 2.5 combined hours per day.
3. Sunday practices and contests are prohibited except NFMSS national championship travel days as published.
4. Sport-specific weekly contest limits appear in each chapter.

Championship Structure

1. The NFMSS championship pathway proceeds: league/conference → state championship → regional qualifier (where used) → NFMSS National Championship.
2. Entry procedures, brackets, seeding, awards, and site standards are published annually in the NFMSS Championship Manual, which supplements these rules.
3. NFMSS reserves all commercial, broadcast, streaming, and naming rights to its championship events.

Uniforms, Branding & Trademark

1. School uniforms must meet the sport-specific standards in each chapter; a visible manufacturer logo is limited to one per garment piece.
2. The NFMSS® name, shield, and wordmark are registered trademarks with the USPTO and may be used by member schools only under the NFMSS brand-use guidelines. Championship merchandise requires an NFMSS license.
3. Use of the NFMSS marks by non-members, or in a manner implying endorsement, is prohibited.

Protests, Waivers & Amendments

1. Judgment calls by officials are not protestable. Protests alleging misapplication of a rule must be filed in writing with the state coordinator within 48 hours with a \$100 filing fee (refunded if upheld).
2. Hardship waivers of eligibility rules are decided by the state coordinator with appeal to the NFMSS national office.
3. These rules are reviewed annually by the NFMSS Rules Committee; member schools may submit proposals by the published deadline.

Chapter 1 — Football (Tackle)

Season: Fall • Divisions: Boys / Girls as applicable • Grades 6–8

Rule 1.1 — Field & Equipment

1. The field is 100 yards by 53 1/3 yards with 10-yard end zones. Schools without regulation fields may petition NFMSS for an 80-yard modified field for regular-season play; all championship games use regulation fields.
2. The game ball is a youth/intermediate size football (approximately 10.5–11.5 inch length). Both teams must use NFMSS-approved balls; the home team supplies game balls.
3. All players must wear: NOCSAE-certified helmets with four-point chin straps, mouthguards (any visible color other than clear or white), shoulder pads, hip/tailbone/thigh/knee pads, and cleats with non-metal tips.
4. Goal posts must be padded to a minimum height of 6 feet. Pylons mark all eight field corners.
5. Team benches occupy the area between the 25-yard lines on opposite sidelines; only rostered players, coaches, and credentialed staff are permitted.

Rule 1.2 — Rosters & Eligibility

1. Rosters are limited to 40 dressed players per game. All participants must be enrolled students in grades 6–8 at the member school and meet NFMSS academic and age eligibility standards (see General Provisions).
2. A player may not participate in more than one level of football (e.g., 7th-grade and 8th-grade teams) in the same calendar week.
3. Each team must designate a head coach who holds current NFMSS coaching certification, including concussion-recognition and heat-illness training.

Rule 1.3 — Game Format & Timing

1. Games consist of four 8-minute quarters with a stopped clock under standard timing rules. By mutual pre-game agreement, quarters may be extended to 10 minutes for 8th-grade competition.
2. Halftime is 10 minutes; intermission between the 1st/2nd and 3rd/4th quarters is 2 minutes.
3. Each team receives three 60-second timeouts per half; unused timeouts do not carry over.
4. Mercy rule: when a team leads by 30 or more points in the second half, the game clock runs continuously except for timeouts, injuries, and scores. If the lead reaches 42 points, the game may be ended by agreement of both head coaches and the referee.
5. Overtime (championship play only): each team receives one possession from the opponent's 10-yard line. If tied after two overtime periods, teams must attempt a 2-point conversion after any touchdown from the third overtime on. Regular-season games may end in a tie.

Rule 1.4 — Playing Rules

1. Standard 11-player football rules apply except as modified in this chapter. Schools with limited enrollment may schedule 8-player games by mutual agreement using NFMSS 8-player field modifications.
2. Kickoffs: the kicking team may not overload one side with more than 6 players and must have at least 4 players on each side of the kicker. A touchback places the ball at the 25-yard line.

3. Punts: on 4th down, a team may declare a protected punt; both lines are frozen until the ball is kicked, and no rush is permitted. This rule is mandatory for 6th-grade competition and optional by league adoption for 7th–8th grade.
4. Point after touchdown: kick attempt = 2 points; run or pass conversion from the 3-yard line = 1 point. This incentivizes kicking-game development.
5. Blitzing is limited to a maximum of 6 rushers on any down in 6th-grade competition.
6. All standard penalties apply; major penalties (personal fouls) are 15 yards, and any player committing two personal fouls is disqualified for the remainder of the game plus the next scheduled game.

Rule 1.5 — Grades 6–8 Safety Modifications

1. Contact practice is limited to 30 minutes per day and 60 minutes per week during the regular season. Full-contact drills are prohibited during the final two practices before a game.
2. No player may participate in more than one game per calendar day or more than two games per calendar week.
3. Any player exhibiting signs or symptoms of a concussion must be removed immediately and may not return until cleared in writing by a licensed medical professional and completing the NFMSS return-to-play progression (minimum 5 days).
4. Intentional helmet-first contact (targeting/spearing) results in automatic disqualification and a mandatory one-game suspension, with video review available in championship play.
5. An ambulance or licensed athletic trainer/EMT must be on site for all games; play may not begin or continue without qualified medical coverage.
6. Heat protocol: when the on-site wet-bulb globe temperature (WBGT) reading exceeds NFMSS thresholds, mandatory water breaks occur every 20 minutes of game clock; above the maximum threshold, the game is suspended.

Rule 1.6 — Officials, Scoring & Records

1. A minimum crew of 4 officials (5 for championship play) is required, each holding current NFMSS officiating registration.
2. Scoring: touchdown 6; PAT kick 2; PAT run/pass 1; field goal 3; safety 2.
3. The home team maintains the official scorebook and game clock; the visiting team may station a verifier at the scorer's table.
4. Game results must be reported through the NFMSS results portal within 24 hours by both schools.

Rule 1.7 — Tiebreakers & Championship Advancement

1. League standings are determined by winning percentage. Ties are broken in order: head-to-head result; record versus common opponents; fewest points allowed in league play; point differential in league play (capped at 14 per game); coin toss administered by the NFMSS state coordinator.
2. State qualifiers advance by league finish and NFMSS power ranking. State champions advance to NFMSS regional and national championship events per the current championship manual.

Chapter 2 — Flag Football

Season: Fall or Spring (by state adoption) • Divisions: Boys / Girls as applicable • Grades 6–8

Rule 2.1 — Field & Equipment

1. The field is 70 yards by 30 yards with 10-yard end zones; a regulation field may be divided to create two flag fields.
2. The game is 7-on-7, non-contact. Players wear NFMSS-approved triple-threat flag belts with two flags at the hips and one at the rear; flags must contrast with uniform color.
3. Shirts must be tucked in; shorts/pants may not have pockets. Mouthguards are required; soft-shell headgear is optional.
4. The ball is youth size for 6th grade and intermediate size for 7th–8th grade.

Rule 2.2 — Rosters & Eligibility

1. Rosters are limited to 15 players per team. Boys, girls, and co-ed divisions are offered; co-ed teams must have at least 3 players of each gender on the field.
2. Standard NFMSS eligibility rules apply (General Provisions).

Rule 2.3 — Game Format & Timing

1. Games consist of two 20-minute halves with a running clock, except the final 2 minutes of each half, which use standard stop-clock timing.
2. Each team receives two 30-second timeouts per half.
3. Halftime is 5 minutes.
4. Mercy rule: a 28-point lead in the second half ends stop-clock timing; a 35-point lead ends the game.
5. Overtime: alternating possessions from midfield, 4 downs to score; championship format continues until decided.

Rule 2.4 — Playing Rules

1. The offense has 4 downs to cross midfield and 4 subsequent downs to score. Failure results in a turnover on downs at the spot.
2. No blocking, screening, or contact is permitted. The quarterback may not run unless rushed; a designated rusher must start 7 yards off the line of scrimmage.
3. All players are eligible receivers. One direct handoff is permitted per down; laterals and pitches behind the line are legal.
4. Flag guarding, diving, hurdling, and stiff-arming are illegal and penalized 5 yards plus loss of down (offense) or automatic first down (defense).
5. Scoring: touchdown 6; conversion from the 5-yard line 1 point or from the 10-yard line 2 points; defensive interception returned for a score on a conversion attempt 2 points; safety 2.
6. No punting in 6th-grade play (turnover on downs places the ball at the opponent's 5-yard line — declared punts move it to midfield); declared protected punts permitted in 7th–8th grade.

Rule 2.5 — Grades 6–8 Safety Modifications

1. Any incidental contact deemed avoidable by the official results in a personal-foul penalty; two personal fouls disqualify the player.
2. Jewelry, casts, and hard braces without approved padding are prohibited.

3. NFMSS concussion, heat, and lightning protocols apply to all outdoor sports (General Provisions).

Rule 2.6 — Officials, Scoring & Records

1. A minimum of 2 registered officials per game; 3 for championship play.
2. Both schools report results through the NFMSS portal within 24 hours.

Rule 2.7 — Tiebreakers & Championship Advancement

1. Standard NFMSS tiebreaker order applies (head-to-head, common opponents, fewest points allowed, capped point differential, coin toss).

Chapter 3 — Basketball (Boys & Girls)

Season: Winter • Divisions: Boys / Girls as applicable • Grades 6–8

Rule 3.1 — Court & Equipment

1. The court is a maximum of 84 feet by 50 feet (74 feet minimum). Baskets are 10 feet; leagues may adopt 9-foot rims for 6th-grade divisions by unanimous vote.
2. Ball size: boys 7th–8th grade use the 29.5" ball; girls all grades and boys 6th grade use the 28.5" ball.
3. The free-throw line is 15 feet; 6th-grade divisions may adopt a 13-foot line. The three-point arc is the standard 19'9" line where marked.
4. Uniforms must display numbers front and back; home teams wear light, visitors wear dark.

Rule 3.2 — Rosters & Eligibility

1. Game rosters are limited to 15 players. Standard NFMSS eligibility applies.
2. A player may dress for only one team per game date.

Rule 3.3 — Game Format & Timing

1. Games consist of four 7-minute stop-clock quarters (8 minutes for 8th-grade championship play by state adoption).
2. Halftime is 8 minutes; 1 minute between quarters.
3. Each team receives three full and two 30-second timeouts per game; one additional 30-second timeout per overtime.
4. Overtime periods are 3 minutes; regular-season games may end after two overtimes as a tie if adopted by the league.
5. Mercy rule: a running clock is used whenever the lead reaches 25 points in the second half, reverting only if the lead falls below 15.

Rule 3.4 — Playing Rules

1. A 30-second shot clock is used in 8th-grade and championship play where equipment allows; otherwise a 10-second closely-guarded stall warning applies.
2. Full-court pressing is prohibited: (a) in 6th-grade play at all times except the final 2 minutes of the game; (b) in all divisions once a team leads by 20 or more points. Violation results in a team warning, then a technical foul.
3. Backcourt count is 10 seconds; closely guarded count (front court, held ball) is 5 seconds.
4. Bonus free throws begin on the 7th team foul per half (1-and-1) and double bonus on the 10th.
5. Dunking is legal in play but prohibited in warm-ups (technical foul).
6. A player is disqualified on the 5th personal foul. Two technical fouls result in ejection plus a one-game suspension.

Rule 3.5 — Grades 6–8 Safety Modifications

1. Padded wall mats are required behind each basket where the wall is within 8 feet of the baseline.
2. NFMSS concussion protocol applies; any player who hits their head on the floor must be evaluated before returning.
3. Jewelry is prohibited; religious or medical items must be taped and approved by the referee.

Rule 3.6 — Officials, Scoring & Records

1. A minimum of 2 registered officials per game; 3 for championship play.
2. The home scorebook is official. Results are reported through the NFMSS portal within 24 hours.

Rule 3.7 — Tiebreakers & Championship Advancement

1. Standard NFMSS tiebreaker order applies. State champions and qualifying runners-up advance to NFMSS regional/national brackets per the championship manual.

Chapter 4 — Volleyball

Season: Fall (girls) / Spring (boys) by state adoption • Divisions: Boys / Girls as applicable • Grades 6–8

Rule 4.1 — Court & Equipment

1. The court is 60 feet by 30 feet. Net height is 7'4 1/8" for girls and 7'11 5/8" for boys 8th grade; leagues may adopt 7'0" for 6th-grade divisions.
2. The ball must be an NFMSS-approved indoor volleyball, 25–27 inches in circumference, 9.2–9.9 psi.
3. Uniform tops must be identical in color; the libero wears a clearly contrasting jersey.
4. A 6-foot unobstructed free zone is required around the court where facility permits.

Rule 4.2 — Rosters & Eligibility

1. Match rosters are limited to 15 players; one libero may be designated per set.
2. Standard NFMSS eligibility applies.

Rule 4.3 — Match Format & Timing

1. Regular-season matches are best 2-of-3 sets; championship matches are best 3-of-5.
2. Sets are played to 25 points (rally scoring, win by 2, cap at 27 in regular season, no cap in championship). Deciding sets are to 15 (win by 2).
3. Each team receives two 60-second timeouts per set. Intermission between sets is 3 minutes.
4. Warm-up protocol is 4-4-2 (shared, serve) minutes minimum.

Rule 4.4 — Playing Rules

1. Rally scoring applies; a point is scored on every rally.
2. Service: players serve from anywhere behind the end line; a serve contacting the net and continuing over (let serve) is playable. 6th-grade divisions may move the service line 3 feet forward.
3. A team may contact the ball a maximum of 3 times (block excluded) before returning it.
4. Substitutions are unlimited entries within NFMSS position rules; 18 team substitutions per set maximum.
5. Back-row players may not attack the ball above net height in front of the attack line, nor block.
6. Ceiling obstructions: a ball contacting the ceiling on a team's own side remains playable if the facility rule is announced pre-match; over the opponent's side is out.

Rule 4.5 — Grades 6–8 Safety Modifications

1. Net antennas and padded standards are required; referee stands must be padded.
2. Jewelry is prohibited. Knee pads are strongly recommended.
3. NFMSS concussion protocol applies to any head/floor or head/ball impact with symptoms.

Rule 4.6 — Officials, Scoring & Records

1. A first referee (stand) and second referee (floor) are required for all matches; a certified scorer and libero tracker complete the crew for championship play.
2. Results (set scores) are reported through the NFMSS portal within 24 hours.

Rule 4.7 — Tiebreakers & Championship Advancement

1. Standings use match winning percentage; ties break by head-to-head, set percentage, point percentage, then coin toss.
2. State champions advance per the NFMSS championship manual.

Chapter 5 — Soccer (Boys & Girls)

Season: Fall or Spring (by state adoption) • Divisions: Boys / Girls as applicable • Grades 6–8

Rule 5.1 — Field & Equipment

1. The field is 100–110 yards by 55–70 yards for 11v11. Leagues may adopt 9v9 on a 70–80 by 45–55 yard field for 6th-grade divisions.
2. Goals are 8 feet by 24 feet (7 by 21 permitted for 9v9). All goals must be anchored; unanchored goals void the field inspection.
3. The ball is size 5 for 7th–8th grade and size 4 for 6th-grade divisions.
4. Shin guards under socks are mandatory; cleats may not have a toe cleat.

Rule 5.2 — Rosters & Eligibility

1. Game rosters are limited to 22 players (18 for championship play). Standard NFMSS eligibility applies.

Rule 5.3 — Game Format & Timing

1. Games consist of two 30-minute halves with a running clock stopped only for injuries, cards, and goals in the final 5 minutes of each half.
2. Halftime is 10 minutes.
3. Mercy rule: an 8-goal differential ends the match at any point after halftime.
4. Overtime (championship only): two 10-minute golden-goal periods, then kicks from the mark (best of 5, then sudden death). Regular-season matches may end in a tie.

Rule 5.4 — Playing Rules

1. Standard soccer laws apply as modified by NFMSS. Substitutions are unlimited and permitted on any stoppage with the referee's beckon.
2. Offside is enforced in all divisions.
3. Heading the ball is prohibited in 6th-grade divisions (indirect free kick); limited heading is permitted in 7th–8th grade in games, with headers restricted to 15 minutes per practice.
4. Slide tackling is prohibited in 6th-grade play and permitted (fair, ball-first) in 7th–8th grade; slide tackling from behind is a red card in all divisions.
5. Cards: a yellow card requires the player to substitute out (re-entry allowed at next opportunity). A red card is ejection plus a one-game suspension; a second red card in a season is a two-game suspension and NFMSS review.
6. Goalkeepers may not punt beyond midfield in 6th-grade divisions (indirect free kick at midfield).

Rule 5.5 — Grades 6–8 Safety Modifications

1. Goal anchoring is inspected before every match; the referee's field report is filed with NFMSS.
2. NFMSS concussion, heat (WBGT), and lightning protocols apply. Lightning: play suspends at first strike/thunder and resumes no sooner than 30 minutes after the last strike.
3. Medical coverage (trainer/EMT) is required for championship events.

Rule 5.6 — Officials, Scoring & Records

1. A referee and two assistant referees are required; a dual-referee system is permitted for regular season by league adoption.

2. Results and cards are reported through the NFMSS portal within 24 hours; accumulated cards track to NFMSS suspension thresholds (5 yellows = one-game suspension).

Rule 5.7 — Tiebreakers & Championship Advancement

1. Standings: 3 points win, 1 draw, 0 loss. Ties break by head-to-head, goal differential (capped at 4/match), goals against, then kicks from the mark at a neutral site if a berth is at stake.

Chapter 6 — Baseball

Season: Spring • Divisions: Boys / Girls as applicable • Grades 6–8

Rule 6.1 — Field & Equipment

1. Base paths are 80 feet; pitching distance is 54 feet (leagues may adopt 75/52 for 6th-grade divisions). Outfield fences of 275–315 feet are recommended.
2. Bats must be marked USABat or BBCOR and may not exceed a minus-5 length-to-weight differential for 8th grade (minus-8 for 6th–7th).
3. Batters, runners, and on-deck players wear NOCSAE dual-ear helmets; catchers wear full protective gear including a NOCSAE-certified mask with throat guard and a protective cup.
4. Metal cleats are prohibited in 6th grade and permitted in 7th–8th grade.

Rule 6.2 — Rosters & Eligibility

1. Game rosters are limited to 20 players. Standard NFMSS eligibility applies.
2. Teams may bat a continuous lineup (all present players) with free defensive substitution, declared before first pitch.

Rule 6.3 — Game Format & Timing

1. Games are 7 innings. A game is official after 5 innings (4 1/2 with home team leading).
2. Mercy rule: 15 runs after 3 innings, 10 runs after 4, or 8 runs after 5 ends the game.
3. Extra innings begin with a runner on second base (the player in the batting order preceding the leadoff hitter of the inning).
4. No new inning may start after 2 hours 15 minutes in regular-season play; championship games have no time limit.

Rule 6.4 — Playing Rules

1. Standard baseball rules apply as modified by NFMSS.
2. Leading off and stealing are permitted; balks are called with one warning per pitcher in 6th-grade play.
3. Malicious contact: runners must slide or avoid on a play at any base; deliberate contact is an out plus ejection.
4. Head-first slides are prohibited except when returning to a base (out if violated).
5. The designated hitter is not used; continuous lineup rules govern batting.
6. Courtesy runners are permitted for the pitcher and catcher with two outs (last recorded out runs).

Rule 6.5 — Pitch Count & Arm Safety (Mandatory)

1. Daily maximum pitches: 6th grade 75; 7th grade 85; 8th grade 95. A pitcher may finish the batter when reaching the maximum.
2. Required rest: 1–20 pitches, no rest day required; 21–35, one day; 36–50, two days; 51–65, three days; 66+, four days.
3. A pitcher removed from the mound may not return to pitch in the same game. A player may not pitch and then catch in the same day after throwing 41+ pitches.
4. Both scorebooks record pitch counts; the home book is official, and counts are filed with results in the NFMSS portal. Violations result in forfeiture.

Rule 6.6 — Grades 6–8 Safety Modifications

1. On-field warm-up pitchers must be protected by a coach or player with a glove and helmet awareness; a protective screen is required for coach-thrown batting practice.
2. NFMSS lightning and heat protocols apply.

Rule 6.7 — Officials, Scoring & Records

1. Two umpires (plate and base) are required; three or four for championship play.
2. Results and pitch counts are reported within 24 hours through the NFMSS portal.

Rule 6.8 — Tiebreakers & Championship Advancement

1. Standard NFMSS tiebreaker order applies with runs-allowed substituting for points-allowed.

Chapter 7 — Softball (Fastpitch)

Season: Spring (Fall by state adoption) • Divisions: Boys / Girls as applicable • Grades 6–8

Rule 7.1 — Field & Equipment

1. Base paths are 60 feet; pitching distance is 40 feet (43 feet permitted for 8th-grade divisions by state adoption). Fences of 185–220 feet are recommended.
2. The ball is a 12-inch optic yellow fastpitch ball (11-inch permitted for 6th-grade divisions).
3. Bats must be certified fastpitch models with intact certification marks.
4. Batters and runners wear NOCSAE helmets with facemasks; catchers wear full gear with throat protection. Defensive facemasks are mandatory for pitchers and corner infielders in 6th grade and strongly recommended in all divisions.

Rule 7.2 — Rosters & Eligibility

1. Game rosters are limited to 20 players; continuous batting lineup permitted as in baseball.
2. Standard NFMSS eligibility applies.

Rule 7.3 — Game Format & Timing

1. Games are 7 innings; official after 5 (4 1/2 with home leading).
2. Mercy rule: 15 after 3, 12 after 4, 8 after 5.
3. International tiebreaker (runner on second) begins in the 8th inning.
4. Regular-season time limit: no new inning after 2 hours.

Rule 7.4 — Playing Rules

1. Standard fastpitch rules apply as modified by NFMSS.
2. Pitching must use an underhand delivery with one foot in contact with the pitcher's plate; the step-back and leap rules follow NFMSS pitching standards published in the case book.
3. Runners may leave the base when the pitched ball is released; stealing (including home) is permitted in 7th–8th grade. In 6th-grade divisions, stealing home on a passed ball is prohibited.
4. The dropped third strike rule applies in 7th–8th grade only.
5. Courtesy runners are permitted for pitcher and catcher at any time (last recorded out).
6. Slide-or-avoid and head-first slide rules mirror the baseball chapter.

Rule 7.5 — Pitching Limits & Arm Care

1. A pitcher is limited to 12 innings per calendar day across all games; innings 8+ in a day require one rest day before pitching again.
2. NFMSS strongly recommends biannual arm-care screening and publishes optional pitch-count guidance in the case book.

Rule 7.6 — Grades 6–8 Safety Modifications

1. A double first base (safety base) is mandatory in all NFMSS softball play.
2. Protective screens are required for coach-thrown batting practice; NFMSS lightning and heat protocols apply.

Rule 7.7 — Officials, Scoring & Records

1. Two umpires minimum; three for championship play.
2. Results are reported within 24 hours through the NFMSS portal.

Rule 7.8 — Tiebreakers & Championship Advancement

1. Standard NFMSS tiebreaker order applies with runs-allowed criteria.

Chapter 8 — Wrestling

Season: Winter • Divisions: Boys / Girls as applicable • Grades 6–8

Rule 8.1 — Mat & Equipment

1. Competition mats must have a circular wrestling area of at least 28 feet in diameter with a 5-foot protection area. Mats are disinfected before each session and between rounds of tournaments.
2. Wrestlers wear a one-piece singlet or NFMSS-approved two-piece uniform, headgear with chin strap, and wrestling shoes. Hair covers are required for hair beyond NFMSS length standards.
3. Special equipment (braces, casts) must be padded and approved by the referee; no hard shells without padding.

Rule 8.2 — Weight Classes & Certification

1. NFMSS middle school weight classes (16): 72, 78, 84, 90, 96, 102, 108, 114, 120, 128, 136, 145, 155, 167, 185, 250 pounds.
2. Each wrestler completes NFMSS body-composition certification before the season establishing a minimum wrestling weight. Weight loss may not exceed 1.5% of body weight per week, and no wrestler may compete below the certified minimum.
3. Weigh-ins occur shoulder-to-shoulder a maximum of 1 hour before dual meets (2 hours for tournaments) with a 1-pound allowance for each consecutive day of a multi-day event.
4. Skin checks by a licensed medical professional occur at weigh-in; wrestlers with communicable skin conditions require a signed NFMSS clearance form.

Rule 8.3 — Match Format

1. Matches consist of three periods: 1 minute, 1.5 minutes, 1.5 minutes (championship finals may use 1.5-1.5-1.5 by state adoption).
2. Overtime: 1-minute sudden victory, then two 30-second tiebreakers, then 30-second ultimate tiebreaker with offensive choice.
3. Dual meet team scoring: fall/forfeit/default/DQ 6; technical fall 5; major decision (8–14) 4; decision 3. Tournament placement scoring follows the championship manual.

Rule 8.4 — Playing Rules

1. Standard scholastic (folkstyle) scoring applies: takedown 3, escape 1, reversal 2, near fall 2 or 3, with stalling and technical violations as published in the NFMSS case book.
2. A fall (pin) requires shoulder contact for 2 seconds.
3. Technical fall ends the match at a 15-point differential.
4. Illegal holds for middle school include: full nelson, headlock without an arm encircled, straight-back suplay/slams, twisting knee locks, and any hold used for punishment. Slams result in injury time for the opponent and potential disqualification.
5. A wrestler receives injury time totaling 1.5 minutes and two recovery timeouts per match; blood time is separate and unlimited at referee discretion.

Rule 8.5 — Grades 6–8 Safety Modifications

1. Wrestlers may compete a maximum of 5 matches per day with a minimum 30-minute rest between matches.

2. Any suspected concussion or loss of consciousness ends the wrestler's day; NFMSS return-to-play protocol applies.
3. Weight-cutting practices involving dehydration (saunas, plastic suits, diuretics) are prohibited and result in suspension and NFMSS review.
4. A licensed medical professional must be on site for all tournaments.

Rule 8.6 — Officials, Scoring & Records

1. One registered referee per mat minimum; an assistant referee is added for championship finals.
2. Results, weigh-in sheets, and skin forms are filed with the NFMSS portal within 24 hours.

Rule 8.7 — Tiebreakers & Championship Advancement

1. Individual qualifiers advance through league and state tournaments by placement; team championships use tournament placement points per the championship manual.

Chapter 9 — Track & Field

Season: Spring • Divisions: Boys / Girls as applicable • Grades 6–8

Rule 9.1 — Facility & Equipment

1. Competition is conducted on a 400-meter (or 440-yard converted) track with a minimum of 6 lanes; 200-meter indoor facilities may host by NFMSS approval.
2. Implements (middle school specifications): shot put — 6 lb (girls) and 4 kg/8.8 lb (boys 8th grade; 6 lb boys 6th–7th); discus — 1 kg all divisions where offered by state adoption.
3. Starting blocks are optional; spikes may not exceed 1/4 inch (3/16 inch on all-weather surfaces).
4. Crossbar heights, hurdle specifications, and pit standards follow the NFMSS field-event tables published in the championship manual.

Rule 9.2 — Events Program

1. Standard NFMSS middle school meet program: 100m, 200m, 400m, 800m, 1600m, 100m/110m hurdles (30–33 inch), 4x100m relay, 4x400m relay, high jump, long jump, triple jump (8th grade), shot put, discus (by state adoption).
2. The 3200m is offered at state and national championships only.
3. Athletes may enter a maximum of 4 events per meet, of which no more than 3 may be running events, and no more than 2 may be races of 400m or longer.

Rule 9.3 — Meet Format & Conduct

1. Heats and flights are seeded by verified entry marks submitted through the NFMSS portal; falsified marks disqualify the entry.
2. Starting commands are “On your marks” and “Set” followed by the starting device; one false start disqualifies in championship finals, while regular-season meets use one warning per race by league adoption.
3. Field events use 3 preliminary attempts with 9 athletes advancing to 3 finals attempts (or 4-attempt format by meet management).
4. Relay exchanges must occur within the 20-meter exchange zone (acceleration zones are incorporated into the zone).

Rule 9.4 — Scoring

1. Dual meets: 5-3-1 individual, 5-0 relays. Invitationals/championships: 10-8-6-5-4-3-2-1 for 8 places (or as published in the meet packet).
2. Ties in field events break by fewest misses at the last height cleared (vertical) or second-best mark (horizontal).

Rule 9.5 — Grades 6–8 Safety Modifications

1. Javelin, pole vault, and hammer are not contested at the NFMSS middle school level.
2. Throwing sectors must be roped with marshals; no athlete may retrieve implements until the sector is cleared by the official.
3. NFMSS heat (WBGT), hydration, and lightning protocols govern all outdoor meets; distance races are re-ordered or suspended above heat thresholds.

4. Athletes competing in multiple events receive a minimum 30-minute rest between running finals of 400m or longer.

Rule 9.6 — Officials & Records

1. A certified starter, referee, and field-event judges are required; fully automatic timing (FAT) is required for state and national records.
2. Results are uploaded to the NFMSS portal within 24 hours; NFMSS national records require FAT, wind reading (sprints/jumps), and implement certification.

Rule 9.7 — Championship Advancement

1. Athletes advance by placement at league and state meets and/or NFMSS national qualifying standards published annually.

Chapter 10 — Cross Country

Season: Fall • Divisions: Boys / Girls as applicable • Grades 6–8

Rule 10.1 — Course & Equipment

1. Championship race distance is 2 miles (3,200m); regular-season races may be 1.5–2 miles. Courses must be measured, marked with flags/cones, and mapped in the meet packet.
2. Course width is a minimum of 6 feet at the narrowest point and 30 feet at the start; the finish uses a chute or chip-timing gate.
3. Racing flats or spikes (max 1/4 inch) are permitted; jewelry rules follow General Provisions.

Rule 10.2 — Rosters & Team Scoring

1. A team consists of 7 runners; 5 score. Unlimited entries may run in open/JV races per meet management.
2. Team scoring: places of the first 5 finishers are summed; lowest total wins. The 6th and 7th runners displace. Ties break by the 6th-runner comparison.
3. Incomplete teams (fewer than 5 finishers) do not receive a team score.

Rule 10.3 — Race Conduct

1. Runners must complete the entire marked course; cutting the course results in disqualification.
2. Pacing by non-competitors, headphones, and electronic communication with coaches during the race are prohibited.
3. A runner who receives physical assistance (except medical evaluation) is disqualified; catching a falling runner momentarily is not assistance.
4. Finish place is determined by the torso crossing the finish line; chip timing with a camera backup is required for championship meets.

Rule 10.4 — Grades 6–8 Safety Modifications

1. NFMSS WBGT heat thresholds govern start times; races above the maximum threshold are postponed. Water stations are required on course when WBGT exceeds the caution threshold.
2. A certified athletic trainer or EMT is required at all championship meets; a sweep official follows the final runner.
3. Weekly competitive racing is limited to 2 races per athlete, and total weekly running volume guidance is published in the NFMSS coach handbook.

Rule 10.5 — Officials & Records

1. A meet referee, starter, and finish judges are required; course marshals cover every turn.
2. Results upload to the NFMSS portal within 24 hours; course records require verified course measurement.

Rule 10.6 — Championship Advancement

1. Teams and individuals advance through league and state meets by placement quotas published in the championship manual.

Chapter 11 — Swimming & Diving

Season: Winter (Fall by state adoption) • Divisions: Boys / Girls as applicable • Grades 6–8

Rule 11.1 — Facility & Equipment

1. Competition pools are 25 yards (or 25 meters) with a minimum of 6 lanes, non-turbulent lane lines, and backstroke flags at 5 yards/meters.
2. Starting platforms require a minimum water depth of 4 feet; where depth is less, starts occur in the water or from the deck.
3. Swimwear must comply with NFMSS suit-coverage and material standards; tech-suit restrictions for middle school follow the case book (no bonded/taped seam suits).
4. Diving requires a 1-meter board over the depth specified in the NFMSS facility table.

Rule 11.2 — Events Program

1. Standard dual-meet order: 200 medley relay; 200 free; 200 IM; 50 free; 1m diving; 100 fly; 100 free; 500 free (8th-grade/championship; 400 free by league adoption); 200 free relay; 100 back; 100 breast; 400 free relay.
2. Swimmers may enter a maximum of 2 individual events and 2 relays per meet (or 4 total events with at most 3 individual by league adoption).
3. Diving is 6 dives (regular season) and 11 dives (championship) with degree-of-difficulty rules per the NFMSS diving table.

Rule 11.3 — Racing Rules

1. Stroke and turn rules follow NFMSS stroke standards: one butterfly kick permitted on breaststroke pullouts; backstroke finish on the back; two-hand touches for breast and fly; 15-meter underwater limits off starts and turns for free, back, and fly.
2. One false start disqualifies (no re-start except starter/equipment error).
3. Relay takeoffs are judged by dual observers or electronic pads at championships; early takeoff disqualifies the relay.

Rule 11.4 — Scoring

1. Dual meets: individual 6-4-3-2-1-0 (6 lanes), relays 8-4-2-0. Championships use 16-place scoring per the meet packet.
2. Ties share combined points for the tied places.

Rule 11.5 — Grades 6–8 Safety Modifications

1. Certified lifeguards distinct from coaching staff are required on deck at all meets and practices.
2. Divers may attempt only dives from their approved list signed by the coach; new dives require practice verification.
3. Hypoxic training sets (extended underwater breath-holding) are prohibited.
4. NFMSS concussion protocol applies to any board, wall, or deck head contact.

Rule 11.6 — Officials & Records

1. A referee, starter, and stroke-and-turn judges are required; diving requires a table of 3–5 judges plus a referee.

2. Automatic timing (pads with button backup) is required for NFMSS records; times upload to the NFMSS portal within 24 hours.

Rule 11.7 — Championship Advancement

1. Swimmers and divers advance by state qualifying times/scores published annually.

Chapter 12 — Tennis

Season: Spring (Fall by state adoption) • Divisions: Boys / Girls as applicable • Grades 6–8

Rule 12.1 — Court & Equipment

1. Matches are played on regulation 78-foot courts (hard, clay, or indoor).
2. Balls are regular-duty or extra-duty yellow balls appropriate to surface; the home team supplies a new can per court.
3. Rackets and attire follow NFMSS standards; school uniform tops are required at championship events.

Rule 12.2 — Team & Match Format

1. A dual meet consists of 6 singles and 3 doubles positions (leagues may adopt 4 singles/3 doubles). A player may compete in one singles and one doubles match per dual.
2. Lineups must be in order of ability; stacking (manipulating lineup order) is a sportsmanship violation subject to forfeiture of affected positions.
3. Regular-season matches: best of 2 sets to 6 (tiebreak at 6–6) with a 10-point match tiebreak in lieu of a third set. Championship finals may use full third sets.
4. No-ad scoring may be adopted for regular season by league vote.

Rule 12.3 — Playing Rules

1. Standard tennis rules apply with players officiating their own courts (calling lines honestly on their side); disputes go to the roving official or coaches' rule.
2. The 20-second between-point and 90-second changeover guidelines apply; coaching is permitted only on changeovers and between sets.
3. A ball landing on any part of the line is good. Opponents receive the benefit of the doubt on all calls a player cannot make with certainty.
4. Racket abuse, ball abuse, and unsportsmanlike language follow the NFMSS point-penalty schedule: warning, point, game, default.

Rule 12.4 — Grades 6–8 Safety Modifications

1. NFMSS heat protocol: above caution WBGT thresholds, a 10-minute rest occurs between the 2nd and 3rd sets and ice/hydration must be courtside; above maximum thresholds play is suspended.
2. Players must wear athletic shoes with non-marking soles; jewelry rules follow General Provisions.

Rule 12.5 — Officials & Records

1. A site director and roving officials cover dual meets; chair umpires are used for championship finals where available.
2. Line scores are reported to the NFMSS portal within 24 hours.

Rule 12.6 — Tiebreakers & Championship Advancement

1. Dual-meet team ties break by sets won, then games won. Individual qualifiers advance through league/state brackets seeded by season records.

Chapter 13 — Golf

Season: Spring (Fall by state adoption) • Divisions: Boys / Girls as applicable • Grades 6–8

Rule 13.1 — Course & Equipment

1. Competition is 9 holes (regular season) and 18 holes (state/national championships) on courses rated for junior play; middle school tee placements target 2,400–2,800 yards per 9 for boys and 2,100–2,500 for girls.
2. Players may carry a maximum of 14 conforming clubs; distance-measuring devices showing distance only are permitted.
3. Push carts are permitted; motorized carts are for officials and medical use only.

Rule 13.2 — Team & Match Format

1. A team consists of 5 players; the best 4 stroke-play scores count. Individual entries are permitted where the school fields fewer than 5.
2. Stroke play governs NFMSS competition; match play may be used for league events by adoption.
3. Ties for team titles break by the 5th-player score, then a scorecard playoff (back 9, back 6, back 3, 18th); individual medalist ties use sudden-death playoff at championships.

Rule 13.3 — Playing Rules

1. Standard golf rules apply with NFMSS local rules published on the tee sheet (out of bounds, drop zones, embedded ball, preferred lies when invoked).
2. Maximum score per hole is triple bogey plus 2 in 6th-grade divisions and quadruple bogey elsewhere (pick up and record maximum, pace-of-play rule).
3. Pace of play: groups must keep position; a group out of position receives a warning, then individual 1-stroke penalties.
4. Caddies are not permitted. Spectators must remain on cart paths/rough and may not give advice; advice from anyone other than a playing partner is a 2-stroke penalty.
5. Coaches may give advice at designated coaching zones announced before the round.

Rule 13.4 — Grades 6–8 Safety Modifications

1. NFMSS lightning protocol: the horn suspends play immediately; players mark, shelter, and may not resume until the all-clear.
2. Each group carries a medical/rules card with emergency contacts; a rules official patrols every 3–4 holes at championships.

Rule 13.5 — Officials & Records

1. A tournament director and registered rules officials administer scoring; attested scorecards are official upon posting.
2. Team and individual scores upload to the NFMSS portal within 24 hours.

Rule 13.6 — Championship Advancement

1. Teams and individuals advance by league/state placement and NFMSS qualifying scores published annually.

Chapter 14 — Lacrosse (Boys & Girls)

Season: Spring • Divisions: Boys / Girls as applicable • Grades 6–8

Rule 14.1 — Field & Equipment

1. Boys: 110 by 60 yards, 6x6 foot goals. Girls: 100–110 by 60 yards with the 8-meter arc and 12-meter fan. Unified small-field 10U-style modifications may be adopted for 6th-grade divisions.
2. Boys wear NOCSAE-certified helmets, shoulder pads meeting current chest-protection standards, arm pads, gloves, and mouthguards; goalies add throat and chest protection.
3. Girls wear NFMSS-approved eyewear and mouthguards; optional soft headgear must meet the NFMSS headgear standard. Goalies wear helmets with throat guards, chest protection, and padding.
4. Stick specifications (length, pocket depth) follow the NFMSS equipment tables by division; field sticks 37–42 inches for boys short crosses in middle school.

Rule 14.2 — Rosters & Format

1. Rosters are limited to 25 dressed players. Boys play 10v10; girls play 12v12 (8v8 or 7v7 permitted for 6th grade).
2. Games are four 10-minute stop-clock quarters (running clock permitted in regular season with stop time in the final 2 minutes of each half).
3. Each team receives two timeouts per half. Mercy rule: a 10-goal lead triggers running clock; faceoffs/draws are replaced by possession to the trailing team at a 6-goal lead in 6th-grade play.
4. Overtime: 4-minute golden-goal periods (championship); regular season may end tied.

Rule 14.3 — Playing Rules — Boys

1. Body checking is prohibited at the middle school level; legal contact is limited to stick checks on the gloves/stick and body positioning. Violation is a 1–3 minute personal foul.
2. One-handed stick checks and takeout checks are illegal; slashing, cross-checking, and checks to the head/neck are personal fouls with mandatory review at 2+ minutes.
3. Counts: 20 seconds to clear midfield, 10 seconds to enter the attack box (where lined).
4. A player accumulating 4 personal fouls (or 5 minutes in personal-foul time) fouls out.

Rule 14.4 — Playing Rules — Girls

1. Checking is prohibited (no stick-to-stick checking) in 6th–7th grade; modified below-the-shoulder checking may be adopted for 8th-grade divisions by state vote.
2. The shooting-space and three-seconds rules within the 8-meter arc are enforced; dangerous shots and follow-throughs are major fouls.
3. Cards: green (team caution), yellow (2-minute releasable), red (ejection plus one-game suspension). Two yellows to one player equal a red.

Rule 14.5 — Grades 6–8 Safety Modifications

1. NFMSS concussion, heat, and lightning protocols apply; medical coverage is required at all championship events.
2. Goalie interference standards and crease rules protect goalkeepers; no offensive player may contact the goalie in the crease.

Rule 14.6 — Officials, Scoring & Records

1. Two officials minimum (three for championships) per game, registered with NFMSS in the applicable code (boys/girls).
2. Results and cards upload to the NFMSS portal within 24 hours; card accumulation thresholds trigger NFMSS suspensions.

Rule 14.7 — Tiebreakers & Championship Advancement

1. Standard NFMSS tiebreaker order applies with goals-against and capped goal-differential criteria.

Chapter 15 — Competitive Cheer

Season: Winter (Fall sideline season by state adoption) • Divisions: Boys / Girls as applicable • Grades 6–8

Rule 15.1 — Venue & Equipment

1. Competition is conducted on a minimum 42 by 42 foot foam or spring-assisted mat (9 strips); no skills may be performed off the mat.
2. Teams wear matching uniforms meeting NFMSS coverage standards; soles must be athletic shoes. Jewelry, glitter (loose), and uncovered supports are prohibited.
3. Signs, poms, flags, and megaphones are the only permitted props; props may not be used in stunts in a manner creating hazards.

Rule 15.2 — Divisions & Rosters

1. Divisions: Game Day, Traditional Routine (2 minutes 30 seconds maximum, music limits per NFMSS music licensing guidance), and Non-Tumbling.
2. Rosters are limited to 24 competitors on the mat; co-ed and all-girl divisions offered by entries.
3. All coaches must hold current NFMSS cheer safety certification, including stunt-progression training.

Rule 15.3 — Routine & Scoring

1. Routines are scored by a panel of 3–5 NFMSS-trained judges on: stunts/pyramids, tosses (where permitted), tumbling, jumps, motions/dance, and overall performance, per the current NFMSS score sheet.
2. Legality officials review all skills in real time; illegal skills deduct per occurrence and must be modified before the next round.
3. Deductions: bobble 0.25; fall 0.75–1.25 by severity; out-of-bounds 0.25 per occurrence; time violation 0.5; illegal skill 2.0.
4. Ties break by the stunt-section raw score, then the judges' rank vote.

Rule 15.4 — Skill Restrictions (Middle School Level)

1. Stunts are limited to two persons high (prep-level and extended stunts per progression); basket tosses and released twisting dismounts beyond a single twist are prohibited.
2. Tumbling is limited to standing/running skills through a single flipping element without twisting beyond a full (round-off back handspring full is the maximum where the athlete is verified).
3. Pyramids may not exceed 2 high; braced flips are prohibited.
4. Inversions must maintain required spotters and hand-arm support per the NFMSS legality grid; free-flying inverted skills are prohibited.
5. Every extended stunt requires a dedicated spotter; all new skills must be mastered at each progression level under coach supervision before competition.

Rule 15.5 — Grades 6–8 Safety Modifications

1. Skill verification forms signed by the coach are filed at registration; judges may require demonstration in warm-ups.
2. A licensed medical professional is required at all NFMSS cheer championships; concussion protocol applies to all falls involving head contact.

3. Warm-up rotations provide matted stunt and tumbling lanes; no skills may be performed in hallways or unmatted areas.

Rule 15.6 — Officials & Records

1. An event director, judging panel, legality official, and timer administer each session; score sheets are released to coaches post-award.
2. Results upload to the NFMSS portal within 24 hours.

Rule 15.7 — Championship Advancement

1. Teams advance by league/state placement or NFMSS qualifying score to regional and national championships per the championship manual.

Administration & Contact

Questions of interpretation, protests, waiver requests, and proposals for amendment should be directed to the NFMSS national office.

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