



**media  
information**



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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **New School Sports Season Approaches; Fall Sports Playing Rules Changes Announced**

**EAST LANSING, Mich. – Aug. 4 –** Nearly 110,000 student-athletes will greet the beginning of a new school year this coming week, beginning fall practice in eight sports at member schools of the Michigan High School Athletic Association.

The fall season is generally the most popular participation season, with approximately 110,000 youngsters of 300,000 for the entire school year taking part. This year, practice in all but one sport begins on Monday (August 11), the lone exception being those schools in the Lower Peninsula sponsoring boys golf, which may begin practice on Thursday (August 7), but may not begin competition before Monday. Competition may also take place on the first day of practice in cross country and girls tennis.

The earliest game date for boys soccer is August 22, girls swimming and diving in the Lower Peninsula may open activity on August 23, and girls basketball may begin competition on August 25.

Practice in football must begin on Monday for all schools wishing to begin regular season games the weekend of August 28-30. This year, 218 games will be played on August 28, 84 games will be played on August 29, and 12 games will be placed on August 30. All football schools must conduct at least three conditioning days of practice before beginning contact, and the conditioning sessions may not include any pads.

There has been an expansion of the football rule where a foul occurs on a scoring play against the defensive team. A year ago, the rules were modified to allow the scoring team to accept the penalty and replay the down or accept the result of the play and have penalty yardage enforced at the ensuing kickoff if the defensive team commits a penalty during a successful point after touchdown attempt. The rule has been expanded this year to provide coverage on the succeeding spot for touchdowns and field goals as well.

In basketball, the big news in Michigan is the return of the point differential rule after a one-year absence. In the Spring, the National Federation of State High School Associations added to the rules the option for state associations to utilize a point differential rule. In Michigan, the rule where the running clock begins once a 40-point differential has been reached anytime after the beginning of the second half will be

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used at all levels of play. The clock will continue to run until the differential falls below 30 points, with the exceptions of called time outs, injuries, the end of the period, and free throws being shot in the final two minutes of the fourth quarter. Another visible rule change will be one where the number of players allowed along the free throw lane during free throws will be limited to four defensive players and two offensive players, with the spots closest to the shooter remaining vacant.

There are no major rules changes for soccer for the upcoming school year.

The 2003 fall campaign culminates with championships beginning with the Upper Peninsula Girls Tennis Finals on October 6, and wraps up with the Girls Basketball Finals on December 6.

Here is a complete list of fall championship dates:

### **Girls Basketball:**

Districts -- Nov. 17-22  
Regionals -- Nov. 24-26  
Finals - Dec. 2, 4-6

### **Cross Country:**

U.P. Finals -- Oct. 18  
L.P. Regionals -- Oct. 25  
L.P. Finals -- Nov. 1

### **Football:**

Selection Sunday - Oct. 26  
Pre-Districts – Oct. 31 - Nov. 1  
District Finals -- Nov. 7 or 8  
Regional Finals -- Nov. 14 or 15  
Semifinals -- Nov. 22  
Finals -- Nov. 28-29

### **L.P. Boys Golf:**

Regionals -- Oct. 9 or 10 or 11  
Finals -- Oct. 17-18

### **Boys Soccer:**

Districts -- Oct. 20-25  
Regionals - Oct. 28-Nov. 1  
Semifinals -- Nov. 5  
Finals -- Nov. 8

### **L.P. Girls Swimming & Diving**

Diving Quals -- Nov. 18  
Swimming/Diving Finals -- Nov. 21-22

### **Girls Tennis:**

U.P. Finals -- Oct. 3  
L.P. Regionals -- Oct. 9 or 10  
L.P. Finals -- Oct. 17-18

The MHSAA is a private, not-for-profit corporation of voluntary membership by over 1,300 public and private senior high schools and junior high/middle schools which exists to develop common rules for athletic eligibility and competition. No government funds or tax dollars support the MHSAA, which was the first such association nationally to not accept membership dues or tournament entry fees from schools. Member schools which enforce these rules are permitted to participate in MHSAA tournaments, which attract approximately 1.6 million spectators each year.

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