

2023-24 TSSAA Handbook

FOOTBALL REGULATIONS

I. CLASSIFICATION PLAN

In Division I, TSSAA schools shall be divided into six classes for football; in Division II, TSSAA schools shall be divided into three classes for football.

II. GENERAL REGULATIONS

- A. All regular-season games must be scheduled by the Friday preceding the first-round play-off games to be counted in the play-off standings.

The play-off brackets will be set and released by 10:00 a.m. CST on Saturday preceding the 1st round of the play-offs. After the brackets are released, a school (Principal, Athletic Director, or Head Football Coach) has until 3:00 p.m. CST to appeal to the state office if an error is suspected. The appeal should be e-mailed to rmcwhirter@tssaa.org, mreeves@tssaa.org, or tssaa@tssaa.org. If no appeals are turned in, then the brackets will become final at 3:00 p.m. CST. If an appeal is turned in prior to 3:00 p.m. CST, then the brackets for that class will be reviewed and any necessary corrections will be made before they are declared final.

- B. The first week of the regular season shall be referred to as Week 1 and the last week of the regular season shall be referred to as Week 11. During the regular season, schools have the opportunity to play a maximum of 10 games. After Monday of Week 1, there can be no change in a school's schedule unless such change is approved by the state office.
- C. In the event of a tie for a championship, second place, third place, or fourth place all opponents varsity games played through TSSAA Week 11 will be counted. Should two teams play each other twice, only the first game will be counted in district/region standings or will be considered in the event of a tie in the district/region to determine which team will advance to the playoff series. Any team ineligible to participate in the play-off series will not figure in a tie for a district/region championship.
- D. Schools that do not qualify for the play-offs may schedule an additional game, bringing the total number of games to 11. No member school shall schedule a game that conflicts with the play-off games.
- E. No school will be permitted to schedule an 11th game if there is any possibility that the school may qualify for the play-offs.
- F. Schools that decide not to participate in the play-off series at the beginning of any classification period may not participate until the next reclassification period. Schools that decide not to participate in the play-off series must notify the state office in writing by November 1 of the year preceding the start of a new classification period.
- G. Schools that decide not to participate in the play-off series are not obligated to participate against other teams within the region nor are other teams obligated to participate against that school.
- H. The season for a team shall end when a team is eliminated from the play-off series or wins the state championship.
- I. If a Tennessee team plays an out-of-state opponent, the home team's state association rules will apply. Out-of-state teams coming into Tennessee should be advised that Tennessee does provide for breaking ties and that all regulation games that end in a tie in Tennessee shall be broken. (Should a team have a tie on its record, it shall be considered as one-half game won and one-half game lost.)
- J. No schools may tape or film a practice or a game involving two other teams. A school may tape or film its own practice or its own game.
- K. **NFHS Football Rule 3-1-2 (Mercy Rule);** Beginning in the second half, if the point differential is 30 points or more, a continuous clock will be used. The clock will only stop for charged time-outs, injuries, and scores. The try will always be an untimed down. The clock shall start when the ball is kicked on the kickoff. If the point differential goes below 30 points, the game shall revert back to regular timing rules.
- L. **Official Clock:** The controls for the electronic clock operator should be on the field rather than in the press box. If controls for the clock become inoperable, the officials may keep the clock in the press box. In cases where an official goes to the press box, adequate security must be provided by the home school's administration for the officials going to and from the press box. If the clock has to be run from the press box, then the home administration must inform the local football association.

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- M. Game Administrator Meeting:** TSSAA Board of Control policy requires that a Game Administrator be appointed by the principal of each host school to supervise every varsity football contest. The Game Administrator must be someone other than the participating coaches. Ideally it should be the principal, athletic director, or another school administrator, but it may be the principal's or athletic director's designee due to staff commitments. This meeting should occur immediately after the officials meet with each head coach.
- N.** Videotaping or filming is permitted if the tapping or filming is for private use or use by the two schools involved and not for public or commercial use. Videotaping or filming must be done from the individual's seat. Individuals will not be allowed to use tripods. A school taping or filming its own game may use a tripod. A school will not be allowed to tape or film a game unless its team is involved in the game. All taping or filming by a school may be approved by the local Game Director, and the Game Director shall assign space, when available, from which the school may tape or film.
- O.** In case it becomes necessary to postpone a regular season game after the officials have arrived, the officials will receive the full game fee, and if they must return to complete the game at a later date, then the officials will be given another half game fee.
- P.** The field must be cleared three minutes prior to kickoff for the coin toss. This includes the playing of the National Anthem and all pre-game ceremonies.
- Q.** If the required field markings or shadow line are not visible, then the game officials have the authority to move the ball from its original position in order to have a measurement.
- R.** If the home team is on the sideline opposite the press box, then the visiting team shall be given the option of having the chains on the press box side of the field.
- S.** Audio, video, and/or lighting systems operators shall not create any noise or distraction that inhibits a team from hearing its signals or obstructs play. LED light shows cannot be conducted during the coin toss, when the ball is marked ready for play (the 40- or 25-second play clock is running), or during a live ball. In the event that audio, video, and/or lighting systems are distracting during the times not allowed, a warning will be given by the Referee to the home administrator to stop the distraction. If this continues after the warning, an unsportsmanlike penalty will be charged to the home team and a written report will be sent to TSSAA by the Referee.

III. REGION PLAY & TIE-BREAKERS

- A.** All teams are required to play all other teams within their region. The teams with the best region records shall be declared the region winner, runner-up, third and fourth place and shall advance to the first round of the football play-off series.
- B.** If at any point when the following tie-breaking procedures are applied, one team has beaten all the other teams that are tied for a play-off position, that team shall be rated above the others.
- C.** In the event of a tie for the region winner, runner-up, third-place, or fourth-place team, if either team(s) has defeated the other(s) in regular-season play, the team(s) shall be rated above the other(s) in the standings. After the region winner has been determined, the tie-breaker procedure shall begin all over again starting at the top to work out the runner-up position. The procedure shall be repeated to determine the third- and fourth-place teams.
- D.** The following tie-breaking procedures shall be applied and all regular-season games, both region and non-region, shall count (After each of the following steps have been applied, item C above shall be applied.):
 - 1. The team with the greatest number of victories.
 - 2. The team who plays the greatest number of teams who win 50 percent or more of their games.
 - 3. The team who has the greatest number of victories over teams winning 50 percent or more of their games.
 - 4. The team whose opponents have earned the most victories.
 - 5. The team whose opponents have received fewer defeats.
 - 6. Coin Flip

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IV. THE PLAY-OFF GAMES (Division I: Class 1A, 2A, 3A, 4A, 5A, 6A)

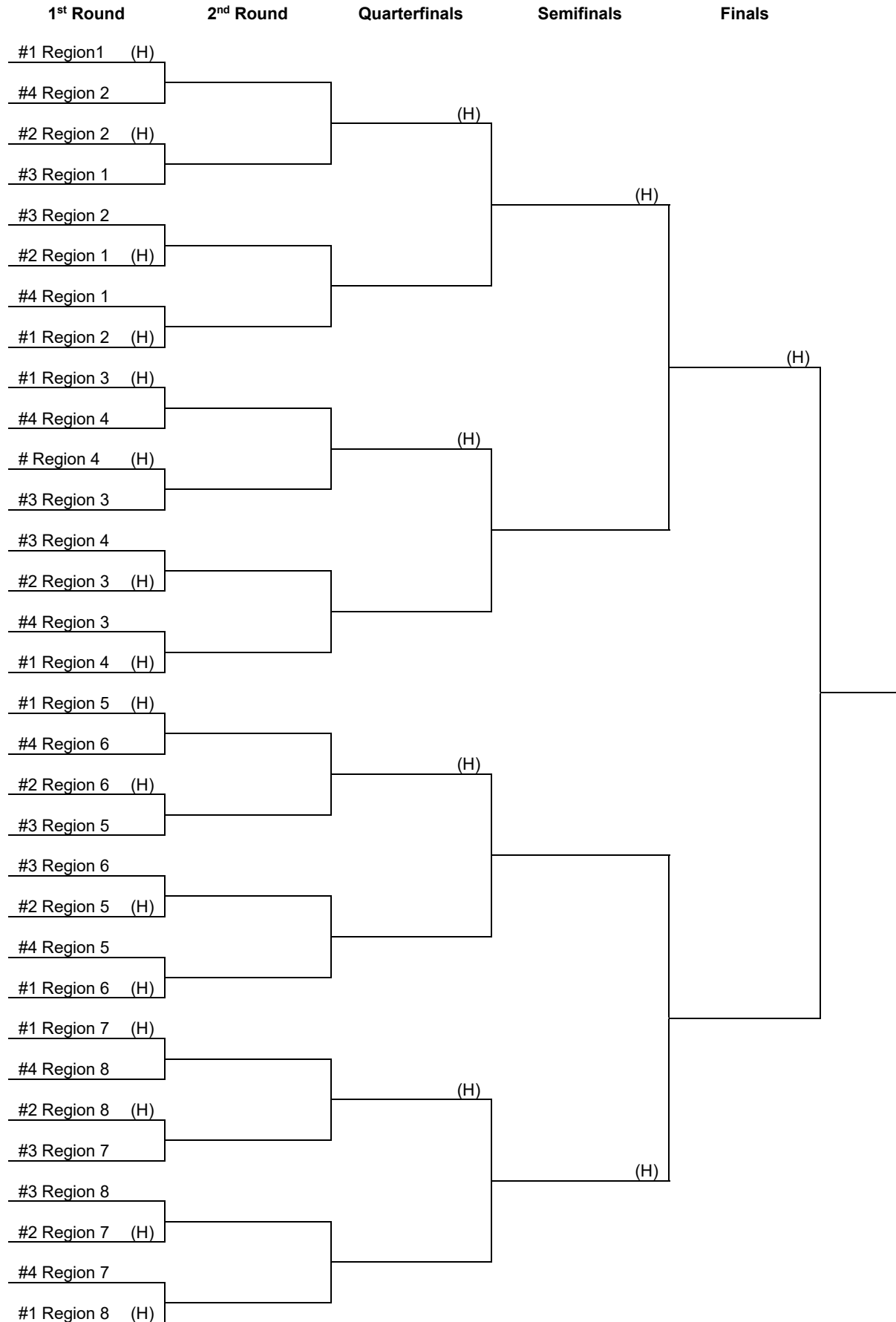
- A.** The first-round games in all classifications shall be played on the 12th Friday of the football season. The second round shall be played on the 13th Friday, the quarterfinals on the 14th Friday, the semifinals on the 15th Friday, and the championship games shall be played during the 16th week.
- B.** In all Class 1A, 2A, 3A, 4A, 5A and 6A play-off games, in the first and second rounds the higher seeded team shall be the host school. In the third round and semifinals in odd-numbered years the top team in each bracket shall be the host team. In the third round and semifinals in even-numbered years the bottom team in each bracket shall be the host team. If two teams from the same region meet in the third round, the team seeded higher in the region standings shall host.
- C.** The host school is to hold the games in stadiums with adequate facilities and large enough to handle the crowds. Adequate facilities include but are not limited to:
 - 1.** Separate dressing rooms for both home and visiting teams with access to restrooms and shower facilities.
 - 2.** Separate dressing areas for officials with access to restrooms and shower facilities.
 - 3.** A restraining fence around the field or a stadium configuration that allows for control of spectator access to playing area.

If the host school does not feel that its facilities are acceptable for a football play-off game, then it shall be the responsibility of the host school to secure adequate facilities. If additional facilities are secured, then the visiting school and TSSAA must be notified by noon on Monday preceding that week's play-off game.

- D.** The principal of the host school shall be the Game Director provided the game is played at his or her field. If additional facilities are secured other than those of the host team, the Game Director must be approved by the TSSAA state office. It shall be the duty of the Game Director to handle all financial arrangements for the game and to make a financial report to the state office and the participating teams.
- E.** Game officials for all play-off games shall be approved by the state office.

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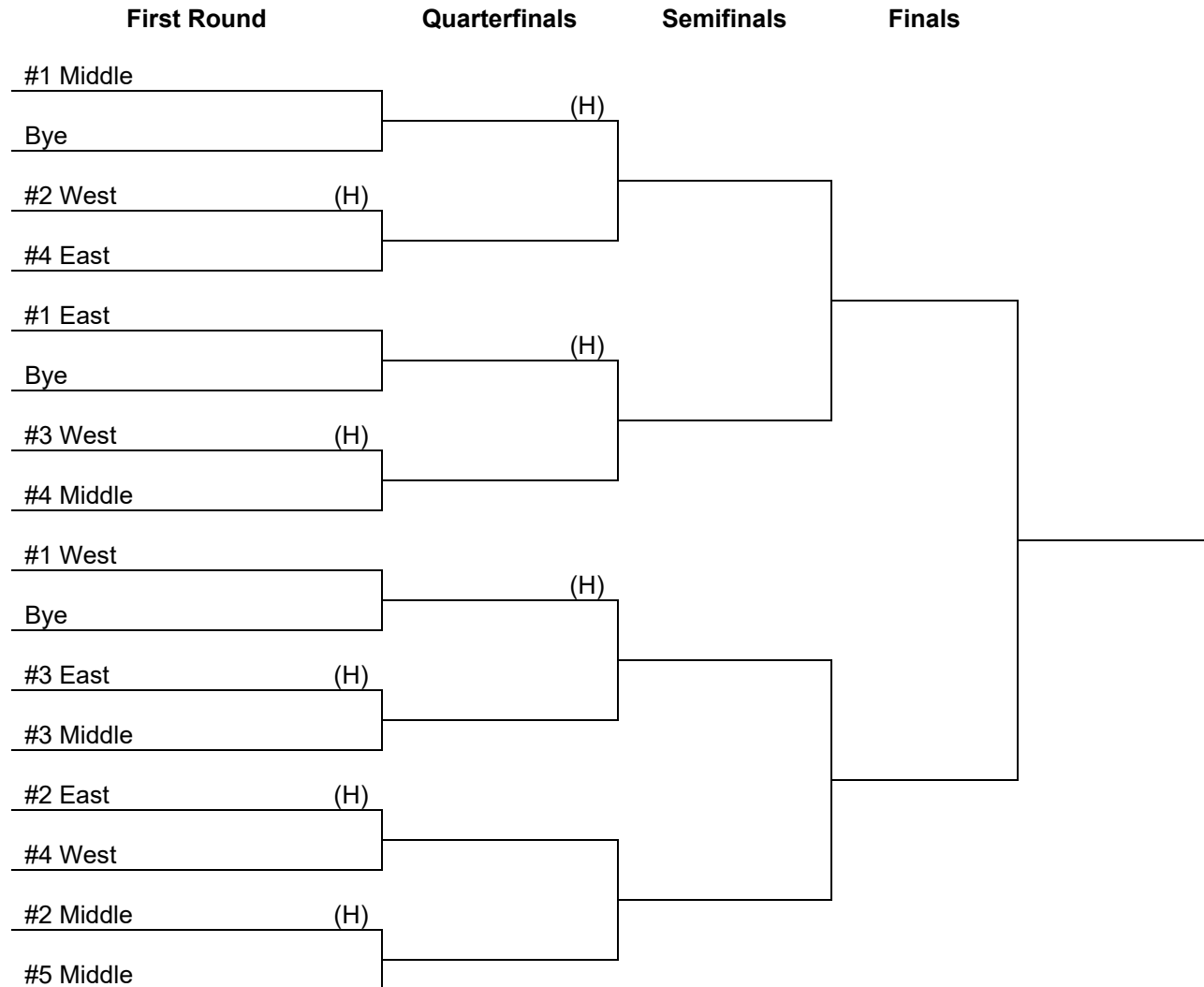
Division I Class 1A, 2A, 3A, 4A, 5A, 6A Football Playoff Bracket



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V. GENERAL REGULATIONS (Division II: Class A, AA, AAA)

- A.** In Class A, there will be an East Region, Middle Region, and a West Region. There shall be thirteen total teams that qualify for the football play-offs. The top four teams from the East Region, the top five teams from the Middle Region, and the top four teams from the West Region shall qualify for the football play-offs. To determine the place of each team, follow the play-off series criteria as set forth in III D (Tie-Breaker Procedures).



The higher seeded team will host through the Semifinal Round. If two teams are the same seed, the top team will host.

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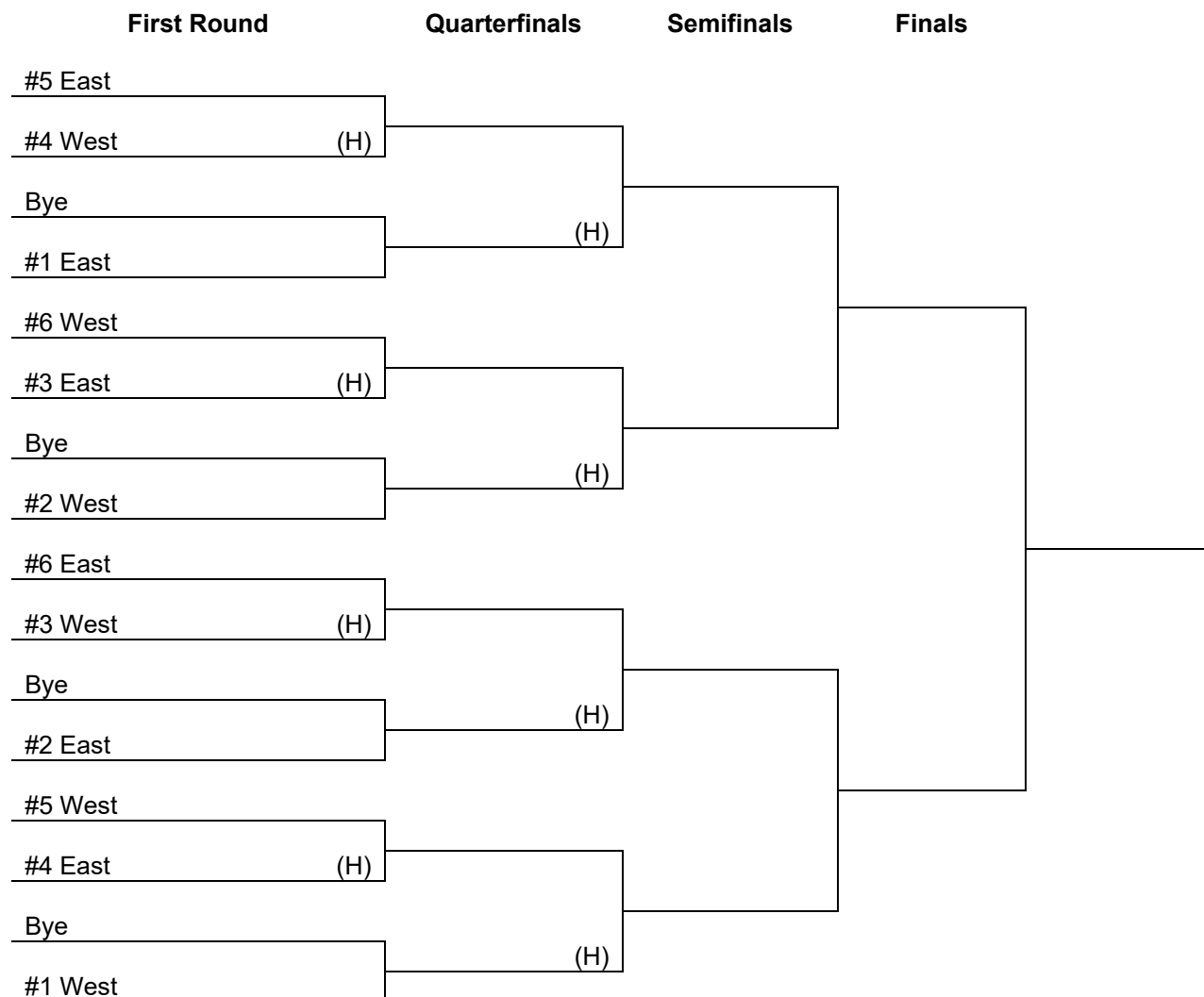
- B.** In Class AA, there will be an East Region, Middle Region, and West Region. There shall be thirteen teams that qualify for the football play-offs. The top six teams from the East Region, the top six teams from the Middle Region, and the top five teams from the West Region shall qualify for the football play-offs. To determine the place of each team, follow the play-off series criteria as set forth in III D (Tie- Breaker Procedures). The bracket for 2022 shall be as follows:



The higher seeded team will host through the Semifinal Round. If two teams are the same seed, the top team will host.

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- C.** In Class AAA, there will be an East and West Region. There shall be twelve teams that qualify for the football play-offs. The top six teams from each region shall qualify for the football play-offs. To determine the place of each team, follow the play-off series criteria as set forth in III D (Tie- Breaker Procedures). The bracket shall be as follows:



The bottom of the bracket will host the First Round and Quarterfinal Round. The higher seeded team will host the Semifinal Round. If two schools are the same seed, in odd-numbered years the top team in each bracket shall be the host team. In even-numbered years the bottom team in each bracket will be the host team.

VI. THE PLAY-OFF GAMES (Division II: Class A, AA, AAA)

- A.** In all classes, the first round games shall be played the 12th Friday of the football season. The second round shall be played on the 13th Friday. The semifinals shall be played on the 14th Friday. The championship games shall be played during the 16th week.
- B.** The host school is to hold the games in stadiums with adequate facilities and large enough to handle the crowds. Adequate facilities include but are not limited to:
1. Separate dressing rooms for both home and visiting teams with access to restrooms and shower facilities.
 2. Separate dressing areas for officials with access to restrooms and shower facilities.
 3. A restraining fence around the field or a stadium configuration that allows for control of spectator access for playing area.

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If the host school does not feel that its facilities are acceptable for a football play-off game, then it shall be the responsibility of the host school to secure adequate facilities. If additional facilities are secured, then the visiting school and TSSAA must be notified by noon on Saturday preceding that week's play-off game.

- C.** The principal of the host shall be the Game Director provided the game is played at his or her field. If additional facilities are secured other than those of the host team, the Game Director must be approved by the TSSAA state office. It shall be the duty of the Game Director to handle all financial arrangements for the game and to make a financial report to the state office and the participating teams.
- D.** Game officials for all play-off games shall be approved by the state office.