

## HIGH SCHOOL

# AHSAA details new public-private postseason split, expands football playoffs



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The Alabama High School Athletic Association **outlined** how its newly-approved public-private postseason split will operate, while also approving several sport-specific postseason changes during a Central Board of Control meeting Friday, Feb. 6.

The AHSAA announced the **clarified** structure will take effect beginning with the fall 2026 season, giving bones to an otherwise unprecedented statewide **restructure** of high school athletics.

The Central Board of Control approved expanding the AHSAA football state championships from a four-day pilot to a five-day pilot beginning in the upcoming 2026 season.

Several sport-specific postseason format changes were passed following recommendations from individual committees. In football, the board

approved a move to a 24-team playoff format in Class 6A, the new largest public-school classification, expanding postseason qualification from the top four teams in each region to the top six. The change was supported unanimously by Class 6A coaches, with the goal of creating more competitive matchups in later playoff rounds.

In volleyball, the board approved the addition of a subregional round following area tournament play, similar to the postseason structure used in basketball. The volleyball committee recommended the change in an effort to better manage the length of the postseason.

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Discussion on flag football postseason structure was postponed, with AHSAA Executive Director Heath Harmon requesting additional time before making a decision. The topic is scheduled to be revisited at the AHSAA's meeting on March 13.

Multiple changes to cheer postseason competition were also approved, changing divisions, participant limits and postseason structures.

The board also approved the creation of an independent school committee, though no specific details were discussed publicly during the meeting regarding its role or responsibilities.

The clarification follows the AHSAA's decision to move to separate playoffs for public and private schools for fall sports through the 2027-28 school year, a measure approved in a 13-2 vote on Friday, Jan. 23. Under the new

structure, public and private schools will continue to compete against one another during the regular season but will be separated for postseason play beginning with the fall 2026 season.

The new alignment includes six public school classifications and two private school classifications, creating eight total state championships among each sport.

As part of the restructuring, the AHSAA eliminated both the competitive balance factor and the enrollment multiplier for private schools. They will now be classified strictly by enrollment numbers.

*Jaeden Day of The Montgomery Advertiser contributed to this report.*

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