

2026 REGIONAL SOFTBALL MANUAL

For questions regarding softball contact:

Jason Eslinger – Office: 515-401-1836; Cell: 515-240-7649

Email: jasoneslinger@ighsau.org

Regional managers: Please read the following information carefully. There are items that are different for this season's regional tournament series.

IGHSAU WEBSITE

All tournament information, including a copy of this manual, tournament manager checklist, tournament site information, game night scores from across the state and other pertinent information can be found on the IGHS AU website. Go to the Softball Tournament Central on the website.

TICKETS

NEW BEGINNING FOR REGIONAL SOFTBALL: ALL REGIONAL HOSTS ARE REQUIRED BY IOWA LAW (BEGINNING JULY 1, 2026) TO PROVIDE A CASH OPTION FOR PAYING CUSTOMERS. CASH TICKETS ARE \$10.

Host schools must use Bound for online ticket sales for all IGHS AU Regional games. Bound sets up ticket links for all postseason games and provides a link for each school. Those links go live on Friday, July 3. Bound files a report directly with the IGHS AU and has the ticket money passed directly on to the IGHS AU.

The regional ticket price is \$10 for everyone kindergarten age and older. Regional hosts have a card reader from Bound that should be used. If your school does not have a card reader, please contact Brian Gordon (brian.gordon@gobound.com) at Bound immediately.

REGIONAL SCORE REPORTING

To report regional scores, log into Bound and enter your score on your Bound page as you've been doing all season. **Scores must be entered immediately following the conclusion of your regional contest.**

Regional brackets and scores will be updated on the IGHS AU website immediately after the score is entered. Schools hosting doubleheaders should text the neutral site score to Jason Eslinger at (515) 240-7649. If you are having trouble entering scores in Varsity Bound, please text your scores to Jason.

TOURNAMENT ROSTER FORM

The tournament roster form can be found on your school's Bound page.

Each team's athletic director shall complete and send the form to the appropriate tournament manager at least 48 hours before each regional contest in which his/her team is participating.

Each team is limited to 28 TEAM PERSONNEL for all regional and state tournament games. Team personnel consist of all school representatives, including but not limited to certified coaches, players, managers, statisticians, certified athletic trainers, etc.

Do not add parents, coaches' spouses or children or other non-team personnel to this list. The roster form should include only those personnel with a specific game-day or school-related responsibility.

Admission to the tournament site will be made strictly from this form, and the tournament manager will also use this form as a data sheet to prepare the program prior to the tournament. Coaches may change

the personnel on this form for each day of competition or if no changes are made, send a copy from round to round to each site's tournament manager.

RULES OF PLAY & TOURNAMENT FORMAT

National Federation Softball Rules with Iowa Adaptations will be utilized during all rounds of the 2026 Softball Tournament. Regional tournament pairings, times, and locations are released by the IGHSAU and will be available on the IGHSAU website. The eight regional winners in each class advance to the state tournament.

All regional tournament games will be seven innings unless the game is tied or is terminated prior to seven innings due to the margin-of-runs rule.

Games will end if a team owns a 10-run lead after four innings (or if the home team owns a 10-run lead after 3.5 innings) or owns an eight-run lead after five innings (or 4.5 innings if the home team is ahead).

The international tiebreaker and time limit options are not used during regional play.

REGIONAL TOURNAMENT ASSIGNMENTS

Tournament sites are tentative and subject to change depending on the participating teams.

Regional finals will be played at the softball facility of the higher seed (best seed) of the remaining two teams in each region. Seeding for the regional final will be based on the final regular season IGHSAU softball rankings.

The IGHSAU reserves the right to schedule double headers, switch tournament sites for geographic, capacity, umpire availability, or other administrative reasons.

In the case of two non-ranked teams meeting in the regional final, the following ordered criteria will be applied to determine the site host:

1. Winner of head-to-head competition
2. Bound Power Rankings

IGHSAU member schools must have applied to host the regional tournament and certify that the facility being utilized meets the minimum requirements to host, including adequate field lighting, bleacher safety, restrooms, concessions, and meets the minimum field dimension requirements. Host schools should have already signed and returned the IGHSAU Hosting Contract.

The athletic director of a team affected by a site change will be notified via email. Site/time/date changes will also be posted on the IGHSAU website.

STATE TOURNAMENT ASSIGNMENTS

2026 state tournament pairings will be made available on the IGHSAU website upon completion of all regional final contests in each class. Pairings will be made based on the final IGHSAU rankings of the qualifying teams. In the case of multiple unranked teams qualifying in a class, the following tie breaker will be used to determine the higher seed:

1. Winner of head-to-head competition
2. Bound Power Rankings

UMPIRE ASSIGNMENTS

The IGHSAU assigns and pays all umpires for all tournament series games. Names, phone numbers and email addresses of assigned umpires will be available to the host athletic director via Dragonfly. The

umpires are instructed to arrive 60 minutes prior to game time. All information regarding the names of the assigned umpires is confidential and for the knowledge of the tournament manager only.

Host schools must contact umpires prior to the contest to inform them of the name of the site manager, contact information and other information related to the contest (parking, changing area, etc.)

INCLEMENT WEATHER – PLEASE READ CAREFULLY

Prior to the start of a game, the tournament manager is responsible for postponement due to inclement weather. **Notify the IGHSAU immediately, followed by the participating teams and each umpire.**

Once a game has started, the umpire-in-chief must determine whether to end the game. This decision should be made in consultation with the tournament manager. The tournament manager should be prepared to offer information on lightning strikes in the area, weather radar, forecast, etc. If the game has been suspended, tournament manager must call Jason Eslinger at (515) 401-1836 or by cell (515) 240-7649. **When a postseason game is suspended due to weather, PLAY WILL NOW RESUME AT THE POINT OF SUSPENSION ON THE NEXT PLAYABLE DATE. This is a new IGHSAU adaptation and eliminates the previous rule that made a game official after five innings in the event of weather interruptions.**

Additionally, postseason games halted by weather may not be resumed if three hours have passed since the designated start time. This will hopefully help site managers and umpires in managing game weather decisions affected by inclement weather.

If a game is suspended, The IGHSAU will determine the make-up time, date and umpires for any makeup or resumed games. It is important that the tournament manager records the score, secures the line ups and point of game information (outs, balls, strikes, etc.) when the game is suspended. If a game is suspended, you may not get the same umpires to come back to finish the game, so it is imperative that the tournament retrieves the line up cards from both teams.

The following NFHS rules apply when weather impacts games which have started:

Rule 4-1-6--After the game starts (when the umpire calls "Play Ball"), the umpires are sole judges as to weather conditions, including whether the grounds are fit for play and whether conditions are suitable for starting the second game of a scheduled doubleheader.

ADMINISTRATORS ADMISSION

Administrators (and guest) who hold IGHSAU/IHSAA administrator passes will be admitted to regional contests and to state tournament contests. Administrators (and guest) must enter through the pass gate and show photo identification. At least one administrator present will be expected to supervise their students and crowd.

PASS GATE ADMISSION

One bus driver may be admitted, along with those individuals listed on the tournament roster form. Coaches and their teams shall be admitted (team members must be accompanied by the coach) at any game in the region in which they are assigned, regardless of whether they drew a bye, have been eliminated, are scouting, etc.

SOFTBALLS

Each host site must supply optic yellow Dudley SB 12L RF Y FP — Red stitch (.47 COR) with the NFHS Authenticating mark game balls for all games. This is the only ball that may be used in regional

competition. Please have 12-16 "suitable" Dudley balls available. "Suitable" means the softball is already rubbed up a bit and not in poor shape.

ADMISSION

Admission price is \$10 per game for each round of the regional tournament. Admission shall be charged to everyone kindergarten age and up. Do not charge for children who are not yet in school.

AWARDS

Regional Final hosts will receive a packet of awards including the championship banner, Ticket Punched poster, as well as information for the team advancing to the state tournament.

GAME STARTING TIME

The preferred game time is 7 p.m. for a single game; 5:00 p.m. for the first game of a doubleheader and on fields without lights. Do not start a game prior to the published time unless IGHSAU approval is given. If incoming weather or other circumstances necessitates a change in time, contact the IGHSAU. In doubleheaders, make every effort to have the teams involved in the following game ready for play as close to the scheduled start time as possible.

MEDIA

A reminder that media boxes are no longer to be used.

PRE-GAME INFIELD

In regional tournaments, both teams may take infield practice on the actual playing diamond. There is a seven-minute limit. The timing shall be done by the home management, preferably by the public-address announcer or scoreboard operator. A reminder shall be issued with one minute remaining. A team still has the option of hitting ground balls in front of their dugout in foul territory during their seven-minute warm-up time if they prefer. Both teams must be afforded the opportunity to use the playing diamond for their seven minutes if they choose.

DUGOUT ASSIGNMENT

If the host school is playing, the host school shall remain in its normal dugout and inform the opponent of their dugout assignment.

When playing at a neutral site during tournament play, the top team listed on the bracket is considered the home team and shall occupy the third base dugout and the bottom-bracket team the first base dugout. A coin toss is no longer needed.

OFFICIAL SCORER & PUBLIC-ADDRESS ANNOUNCER

Ensure that the official scorer and public-address announcer arrive at least 30 minutes prior to game time. The public-address announcer shall announce players and/or actions of the game on an impartial and nonbiased basis (the same for both teams). Please make sure the public-address announcer visits with each team before the game for correct pronunciations of athlete names.

WGBT HEAT PROTOCOLS FOR SOFTBALL

When in competition and the WGBT is 87.7 or greater (RED/BLACK) umpires should have a three-minute hydration break starting in the beginning and mid-point of inning 3 and every inning through the remainder of the contest. For more information about the heat safety, please refer to the [Health/Safety page](#) on the IGHSAU website.

WALK-UP MUSIC IS PROHIBITED AT ALL REGIONAL TOURNAMENT GAMES.

Music may be played between innings; however, the music should be stopped before the batter steps into the batter's box.

BANNERS & DISPLAYS

The display or usage of balloons, banners, signs, or confetti is prohibited. Signs such as those used for advertisements on an outfield fence or for tournament administration are allowed. Additionally, any object which could provide a safety concern is prohibited, as are any artificial noisemakers (e.g. air horns, cowbells, etc.) Artificial noisemakers should also not be present or used in the dugouts. These rules also apply to the state tournament.

SPECTATORS

All spectators at IGHSAU-sponsored softball tournaments shall wear shoes. Decorative masks which are non-COVID-19 face coverings are not permitted.

A tournament softball game is held as part of the educational environment. The Board of Directors of the Iowa Girls' High School Athletic Union has adopted the following policies. It is the expectation that the host school enforces these rules regarding unacceptable behavior:

Any of the following actions will result in ejection of the offender from the premises:

Disrespectful conduct, including verbal or written profanity, obscene gestures or comments, offensive remarks or signs of a sexual nature, or other vulgar actions that demean individuals or the event.

Throwing articles onto the contest area.

Entering the contest area in protest or celebration.

Physical confrontation involving contest officials, coaches/directors, contestants, or spectators.

Spectator interference with the event.

Use of laser light pens.

Use of artificial signs, banners, and noisemakers (air horns, cowbells, keys, thunder sticks, megaphones, etc.) is prohibited. (First offense = Warning. Subsequent offense = Ejection.)

Please notify the IGHSAU if any spectator is ejected from the facility, including the name of the spectator.

A procedure has been established to assist officials and administrators when spectator conduct becomes a problem.

1. The administrator in charge for the evening shall meet with the officials when they arrive on-site 60 minutes prior to scheduled game time. The administrator should identify his/her location during the contest, so umpires know where to locate the administrator if the need arises.

2. If a problem arises during a game, the umpire shall stop play, notify the administrator in charge of the problem, and determine a remedy to the problem. The remedy may include requesting supervision of the troublemaker, direct confrontation of the troublemaker by the administrator, or removal of the

troublemaker from the premises. The game will not restart until the administration complies with the remedy ordered by the official.

Host game management is responsible for every spectator, regardless of which school the spectator supports. At no time are umpires to address spectators directly. Any necessary communication with spectators shall be done by the administrator in charge.

What defines a problem which needs to be addressed?

A) Any derogatory or inappropriate remarks directed at players, coaches, or officials.

B) Any comments or actions by spectators which prevent the official from doing his or her job at the highest level possible.

ALCOHOL AND TOBACCO POLICY

No alcohol or tobacco is to be sold or consumed on the grounds of any state tournament venue leased or provided to the IGHSAU for the purpose of conducting a State Championship. **Section 123.46 of the Iowa Code States:** A person shall not possess or consume alcoholic liquors, wine beer on public school property or while attending a public or private school-related function. A person shall not be intoxicated or simulate intoxication in a public place. A person violating this subsection is guilty of a simple misdemeanor.

PETS/ANIMALS PROHIBITED

No pets are permitted at events sanctioned by the IGHSAU or IHSAA. Any person with a pet will be asked to leave. This policy shall comply with the provisions of Iowa Code 216c in that such a person with a disability or person training an assisted animal has the right to be accompanied by a service dog or an assisted animal under control. The person is liable for damage done to any premises or facility by a service dog or assisted animal.

VIDEO STREAMING

Media Outlets, along with interested schools or individuals may apply to the IGHSAU regarding video broadcasting access at select postseason lead-up events while following procedures required for access. Information can be downloaded by clicking on the link below. **Streaming regional games without the consent of the IGHSAU is prohibited.**

[Regional Event Policies](#)

[Regional Event Broadcasting Fees](#)

[Application Form](#)

PHOTOGRAPHY

Flash photography is permitted from dead ball territory only. No photographers, press, etc. will be allowed in live ball territory. These rules apply equally to television stations using video cameras.

VIDEOTAPING

Paying spectators, including those scouting for other teams, are not restricted from videotaping if the video equipment is handheld or on a monopod. A tripod may be used if located on the ground and does not hinder any spectator's view. Tournament managers are not to make special arrangements for seating or electrical hook-ups for spectators trying to film or videotape. No supplemental lighting is permitted.

Teams wishing to videotape the games are permitted to utilize equipment if it is not hindering spectators' view and is attended at all times.

PRESS ACCOMMODATIONS

All press outlets have been advised to directly contact the tournament manager of a site from which they wish to cover regional tournament games.

Radio stations and newspapers are not obligated to inquire through the IGHSAU nor is the tournament manager obligated to acquire sanction from the IGHSAU for regional tournament coverage.

Television stations are not obligated to acquire sanction from the IGHSAU to tape highlights or to tape a game for 24-hour or more delayed rebroadcast. Live video broadcast or video streaming of regional softball contests is not permitted without IGHSAU permission.

CHARITABLE SOLICITATIONS

No fundraising, solicitations, etc. will be permitted within the softball complex. All raffles, bake sales, booster club sales, etc. must take place outside the complex at IGHSAU-sponsored tournament games.

MUSICAL ENTERTAINMENT

A United States flag shall be displayed in the facility and the National Anthem shall be played prior to the contest (before the first game of a doubleheader).

Players are expected to conduct themselves in a quiet and attentive manner until the Anthem is fully completed.

The script to be read: "Ladies and Gentlemen, the playing of our National Anthem," or "Ladies and Gentlemen, please direct your attention to the flag of our great country with the playing of our National Anthem."

Music may be played prior to the game, between innings, and after the game. Walkup music is prohibited during the regional tournament series.

Host schools are responsible for securing the appropriate copyright license for music played at IGHSAU regionals.

The umpire-in-chief may order the music turned down or off if the music is inappropriate or is interfering with the orderly administration of the game.

OFFICIAL PROGRAMS FOR TOURNAMENTS

A host school may furnish the official programs for its tournament either on a gratis or sales basis and may retain any profits derived from the sale thereof. Please contact the opponent's school administration prior to soliciting advertisements from that community's businesses.

PASS OUT TICKETS

Try to avoid pass-out tickets. If it is necessary to give pass-out tickets, it is suggested that a rubber stamp be used to mark the back of a person's hand.

One bus driver may be admitted, along with those individuals listed on the tournament checklist.

STATE TOURNAMENT INFORMATION

Prior to the semifinal round of regional play, information will be posted on the IGHSAU website explaining

all state tournament protocol and information. A packet of information about the state tournament in Fort Dodge will also be provided to the regional final winner at that site.