

2025 Homeschool World Series - Tournament Rules

National Federation of High Schools (NFHS) Rules Apply, with these Clarifications & Additions:

Time limits: Pool games have a time limit of 2:10. Unless noted as unlimited, in other games no new inning begins after 2:30.

Ties & extra innings: There will be no tie games. Games in all rounds are played until a winner is determined, regardless of time limits. In pool play extra innings, an unearned baserunner (from just ahead of the inning's leadoff batter in the order) begins on 2b.

Equipment requirements: Only BBCOR-certified bats and NFHS-approved gear may be used in the tournament.

Practice fields: All batting cages and fields 5 through 8 are available for practice on Sunday prior to the tournament, up to 90 minutes per team; first come, first served. On Wednesday, batting cages are open but fields are NOT available for practice.

Bracket and tournament updates: The tournament bracket specifies the intended game times, fields, and matchups for each game in the tournament. Updates to the brackets (or communicated directly from tournament staff) override previously posted schedules; these may occur due to bracket results, weather or other factors. Teams and families should refer to hwsa.net frequently for up-to-date information. We strive to post updates as quickly as possible to allow sufficient advance notice for travel time, etc. Failure of players to note a bracket update will not be cause for a delay or replay of any game.

Number of games: Weather permitting, teams registered for the full tournament will play a minimum of 5 games and a maximum of 7 games. D3-direct teams will play a minimum of 3 games in addition to a practice/scrimmage game on Monday. The number of games depends on whether a tie-breaker game is needed after pool play, and whether a Q-Game Replay is required.

Weather contingencies: We will use Wednesday as a rain makeup day, as needed. After Wednesday, we will do whatever it takes to get the tournament completed, even if it means shortening games and/or playing at unusual times. In the event of rainy conditions, please be flexible as we work out field and time contingencies. In all cases, refer to hwsa.net for updates.

- **COACHES**, please ensure that your cell-phone is charged and monitored with notifications ON at ALL times.
- For schedule changes due to weather, teams should be flexible and prepared to play within 2 hours' notice.
- In the event of lightning, play is halted on all fields signaled by 3 airhorn blasts; teams must take shelter in a dugout.

Game balls, balls out of play: HWSA provides game balls meeting NFHS standards. Home run balls may be kept by the team/player; other game balls out of play must be returned to the field or to the Field Manager. Both teams retrieve foul balls along fence and out of play on their respective side of field. Our field managers have candy to exchange for ball returns!

Home/Visitor dugouts: Home (H) and visiting (V) teams are denoted on the bracket for some games; for other games there is a coin-flip needed to determine the Home team. Please check the tournament program book for details on each game.

- When both teams are newly arriving at a particular field, the Home team will occupy the First Base Dugout
- When one of the opposing teams has just completed a game *on the same field*, they will remain in their dugout regardless of which team is Home/Visitor. Signs are used to indicate which team is Home for fans and the umpires.
- Coin-flips will occur via text the previous evening if possible, else during warmups as early as possible prior to the game.

Dugout personnel: Only coaches listed on the roster are permitted in the dugouts during games. "Bat boys" are allowed but must wear a helmet at all times. The Home/official scorebook may not be in the dugout, but the Visitor scorebook may be kept in the dugout. Team photographers are allowed in the dugout but are not allowed on the field during warmup or game play.

Official rosters: The World Series Program contains the official roster for each team. Only players listed in the program roster AND active for the tournament may participate in tournament games. Inactive alternates or players deactivated from the active roster may *not* take the field for game play or be in full uniform. Any discrepancies in jersey numbers from what is printed in the program book should be brought to the attention of the Field Manager and opposing coach before a game starts.

Coaching attire: The head coach (manager) and all base coaches must wear team uniforms, (windbreakers are okay). We encourage base coaches to consider helmets or helmet-hats. Assistant coaches not on the field during game play are exempt.

Pre-game infield/outfield: Infield allowed for either team if time allows for both teams to take it (8 minutes maximum allowed per team). Game times will not be altered in order to allow for pre-game infield. Please use the outfields while fields are being prepared.

Official score book & scoreboard: The **home** team score book (or tracking app, if it supports pitch-by-pitch tracking) will be the “official score book” for each game. Their scorekeeper may NOT be in the dugout, and must be accessible to the plate umpire. We encourage both scorekeepers to consult together throughout the game. Any technical difficulties with the home team’s scoring will cause the official book to transfer to the visiting team’s scorekeeper. The **visiting** team will provide the scoreboard operator.

Mercy rule: For all games, if the visiting team is ahead 20 runs after 3 innings (or home after 2.5), 15 runs after 4 innings (home after 3.5), or 10 runs after 5 innings (home after 4.5), a mercy rule is engaged and the game is ended at the current score.

Courtesy runners: Are allowed at coach’s discretion (with any number of outs) only for the catcher and pitcher of record.

Protests: Protests are allowed on potential rule interpretations only; there are no protests on judgment calls by the umpire. Protests must be handled at the time of the dispute before the next pitch. See the protest section in the Rules of Conduct.

Ejection: An ejection of a player or coach is considered a serious incident, but we recognize that umpires are human and sometimes overreact based on a misunderstanding of intentions. The HWSA board reserves the right to investigate these situations and, at our discretion, to suspend any player or coach who is ejected from a game, regardless of the reason, for the following game. Depending upon the infraction, the HWSA Board of Directors may take additional disciplinary action against an ejected coach &/or player. (See the Code of Conduct in the next section for more details).

Pitcher usage: HWSA does not have “pitch count” rules. Coaches are responsible for monitoring the welfare of their pitchers’ arms.

Balk rule clarification: The pitcher is allowed to stride & feint toward an occupied 3b with his foot on the rubber, and then throw to 1b. This rule differs from state to state in high school; we follow the Florida state rules for tournament play.

Medical needs: HWSA does not staff medical experts onsite for the tournament. For any emergency issues, 911 should be called. For non-emergencies, the tournament office has a list of nearby care facilities.

Seeding and Tie-Breaker Rules

Pre-tournament pool play drawing: The top returning teams from the last HWSA Division I are pre-seeded across the pool groups. At the coaches meeting, remaining D1 teams and last year’s D2 winner are given the option to select their slot for pool play, prior to the random draw. The other teams then complete a random draw to fill out the remaining positions.

Pool play tie-breakers (situational): If all 3 teams in a 3-team pool end up with a 1-1 record, and if all divisions will send a team into Division III, there will be a tiebreaker needed. The top team based on the Q round tie-break criteria (below) will advance to the Q round, along with the winner of a tie-break game.

Seeding & tie-break criteria: the following seeding and tie-break criteria will be evaluated one at a time in the sequence below, until the teams can be ranked for tie-breakers, for the Qualifying round, and potentially for final Division III results:

- team record
- *head-to-head record (for Division III results)*
- **game-capped* run differential (capped at +/- 10 runs per game) – new this year**
- *head-to-head record (for Q round seeding)*
- runs allowed per inning
- runs scored per inning
- coin-flip

Q-game replays (optional): If a lower seed defeats a team which went 2-0 in pool play, a Q-game replay will be scheduled, the winner of which receives a berth in Division I, the loser in Division II. In all other situations, the winner of the Q game immediately gains a Division I berth, and the loser goes to Division II. If a replay game is needed, it can be scheduled for later Tuesday only if BOTH teams agree AND umpires are available; otherwise it will occur Thursday morning.

Division III formation, seeding & results: Division III teams coming from pool play will be seeded by the seeding criteria above; D3-direct teams (if any) are then seeded at the bottom of the division based on the order of their previous finish positions.