

AAA Regulations and School Soccer

While the Arkansas Activities Association (AAA) is ultimately the entity that interprets and enforces its own rules with respect to junior and senior high school soccer, Arkansas Soccer Association (ASA) is finding that many athletes and their parents are not aware of certain important provisions set forth by AAA.

The vast majority of junior high schools are NOT part of AAA, and therefore, AAA rules do NOT apply to those schools. Though you should still confirm with your school or AAA directly, AAA has advised ASA that for the 2021 season, the following junior high schools have registered with AAA: Hot Springs, Hot Springs Lakeside, Anthony, Episcopal, and Little Rock School District - Middle Schools. By contrast, there are a few hundred senior high schools that ARE registered with AAA so it is very likely that your high school soccer program is subject to AAA rules.

AAA states that the 2021 spring soccer season starts on February 28 and concludes no later than May 22, 2021, though it could conclude earlier if a school does not make the State tournament or is eliminated earlier. During this time period, school athletes are PROHIBITED from playing any soccer games that are not part of their school soccer schedule. Practices and tryouts with non-school teams are permitted during the school season but ONLY on days where there is no school practice or game. More information can be found here:

http://members.ahsaa.org/public/userfiles/FormsResources/2020-21_AAA_Handbook.pdf

What does this mean? If you elect to play club soccer this spring with any organization outside of your AAA-affiliated school schedule, you may be INELIGIBLE to play soccer for your school. If you elect to play in a non-school sponsored tournament during the school season, you may be INELIGIBLE to play for your school in the spring. If you practice with any non-school organization on a date in which you had a school practice or game during the defined school season, you may be INELIGIBLE to play for your school in the spring. If you are deemed to be INELIGIBLE, your school may be forced to FORFEIT matches.

Please note that these are not ASA regulations but are rules set forth by AAA, the governing body for school soccer in Arkansas. ASA does not interpret AAA regulations, but in light of the number of inquiries on this subject, ASA wanted to make individuals aware of these possible consequences so that you can investigate your situation directly to make the most informed decision possible. If you are not certain or believe information being provided to you is inaccurate, please be sure to contact Joey Walters, Deputy Executive Director for AAA and Rules Interpreter for soccer, at (501) 955-2500 or Joey@AHSAA.org, and he can answer any questions you might have to ensure that you do not lose your school eligibility.