

# 2026 Football

## Classification based on grades 9-12

|    |             |    |          |
|----|-------------|----|----------|
| 6A | 1,400- over | 3A | 349-175  |
| 5A | 1,399-700   | 2A | 174 -90  |
| 4A | 699-350     | 1A | 89-below |

## 2026 Football Season

|                        |                           |
|------------------------|---------------------------|
| First Day of Practice  | August 10                 |
| First Competition      | After 10 days of practice |
| Round of 12            | October 31                |
| Round of 8             | November 7                |
| Round of 4             | November 14               |
| Milk Bowl Championship | November 21               |

\* Teams must enter rosters, schedules and scores on MaxPreps.

## Football Sports Practice Model

The IHSA Board of Directors has adopted the fall sports practice model for football.

## Ten Day Practice Rule

Ten days of practice, in the sport, must be conducted before an athlete participates in a contest regardless of when they become a participant on the team. Helmets may be worn on the first day. Each player must have at least two (2) days of practice without any pads. Shoulder pads may be worn on the third (3<sup>rd</sup>) day and full pads on the fifth (5<sup>th</sup>) day.

## Game Limitations for Each Team

No team may play more than nine games maximum for regular season play. No interschool football game will be approved unless at least five days have elapsed from the date of the previous game by that team. The term "football team" includes freshman, junior varsity, and varsity teams in grades 9-12. With approval, a team may play on the fifth day following competition.

## Game Limitations for Individual

6A, 5A, and 4A football players are permitted to play a maximum of four quarters per day and five quarters per week. 3A, 2A and 1A football players are permitted to play a maximum of five quarters per day and six quarters per week provided they are not a varsity starter on offense or defense. Participating on special teams does not count as a quarter played.

The week in which the five/six quarters may be played is measured from Sunday to Sunday. A student who played in two quarters of the varsity game on Friday night could play in three quarters of the JV game the following Saturday. Once a player enters the game during a given quarter, they are credited with one quarter of participation, regardless of how long they remain in the game during that quarter. Participating on special teams does not count as a quarter played.

When playing two games the same day 6A, 5A, and 4A schools may request a waiver of the four quarters per day, to five quarters per day rule. 3A, 2A, and 1A schools may request a waiver of the five quarters per day rule, to six quarters per day.

A letter requesting a waiver of the one-day quarter rule must be submitted to the IHSA. It must be signed by the principal and athletic director, that verifies:

1. There are 44 or fewer participants in the program at the 6A, 5A, 4A, 3A classifications, and 32 or fewer participants in the program at the 2A and 1A classifications, and the program desires to field two teams, or
2. There are 61 or fewer participants in the program at the 6A, 5A, 4A, 3A, classifications, and 32 or fewer participants in the

program at the 2A and 1A classifications, and the program desires to field three teams; and

3. The lack of participants will cause the loss of a sub-varsity program; and
4. The lack of participants will cause the school to cancel scheduled games at the sub-varsity level; and
5. A minimum of 15 'varsity only' players must be designated for 6A, 5A, 4A, and 3A schools, and 7 'varsity only' players for 2A and 1A schools. The designated 'varsity only' players will be limited to four quarters per day in 6A, 5A, 4A, and 3A, and five quarters per day in 2A and 1A; and
6. The school's coaching staff has not, and will not, cut players or discourage anyone from participating in football, regardless of their ability.

A football player who exceeds the limitations of regular season participation will become ineligible for district, state or any other additional IHSA sponsored competition of that sport.

## Scheduling Requirements

All member schools that sponsor football are required to participate in the statewide scheduling of varsity football games in order to provide all schools a full and competitive schedule.

## Football Rules

Football in Idaho is governed by National Federation (NFHS) rules. Rule Books and Case Books must be picked up and signed for by a school representative at the district rules clinic.

## Eleven-Man Mercy Rule:

If a 40-point differential is reached at any point during the game, the mercy rule will go into effect at the start of the fourth quarter. Once in effect, the game clock will run continuously and will only stop for injuries, team timeouts, or when a team scores.

The mercy rule does not apply to IHSA playoff or championship games.

## Eight-Man Football Rules

Eight man football is played under the same rules as eleven man football, except for the modifications specified in the NFHS Rules Book. All eight man games must be officiated by a minimum of three certified officials.

**Eight-Man Mercy Rule:** If a 40-point differential is reached at any point during the game, the mercy rule will go into effect at the start of the third quarter. Once in effect, the game clock will run continuously and will only stop for injuries, team timeouts, or when a team scores. After halftime, if the mercy rule is in effect, the coach or administrator of the losing team may call a timeout to end the game.

The mercy rule does not apply to IHSA playoff or championship games.

Coaches and officials from both teams are strongly encouraged to meet before the contest to discuss potential mercy rule scenarios. During this meeting, they may agree to end the game at a specified point differential or establish a plan if the mercy rule is reached.

## Resolving of Ties

Games ending in a tie will use the NFHS 10 yard line overtime procedure unless the result does not affect playoff representation. In those cases, both schools must agree before the game whether to play overtime or allow the game to end in a tie.

## Safety

To help protect participants, the IHSAA recommends the following:

1. Principals and activity directors should prepare a letter instructing the football coach not to teach face tackling or butt blocking. A copy of this letter should be maintained on file at the school.
2. Coaches should include a clear description of legal blocking and tackling techniques in their player and/or coaching manuals. Head coaches are responsible for ensuring that all assistant coaches consistently teach these proper methods. Protect yourself and the integrity of the profession by emphasizing safe and legal techniques.
3. A coach or trainer should check helmets and other equipment periodically for damage or improper adjustment.
4. Participants must be informed of any reasonably foreseeable dangers. This includes clear warnings about the risk of catastrophic injuries, such as paralysis or death.
5. All game rules should be clearly identified, strictly followed, and promptly reinforced whenever violations occur.
6. Documentation is critical. Keep detailed records of all instructions and guidance provided, including who was involved, when and where the communication occurred, and how it was delivered. Maintain these records in a secure location and submit a copy to the school administration office.

## Heat Stroke

Heat stroke has caused fatalities in American football in recent years. These are preventable deaths. This information is provided to Idaho coaches and trainers as a guide for the prevention, recognition, and proper response to heat-related illnesses.

1. Acclimatization and Conditioning: The most important force operating to prevent heat stroke is acclimatization. Players should be encouraged to start workouts 14-21 days prior to the first practice session. The best single activity is running, and this should start with 20-to-30-minute workouts twice daily.
2. Proper Clothing: Jerseys should be short sleeved and lightweight. Cotton socks are recommended.
3. Fluid Intake: Fluids should always be readily available on the practice field. A manager should weigh athletes before and after every practice. Players who lose more than five pounds should rehydrate by consuming adequate fluids to replace the loss.
4. Practice: Use caution when temperatures reach 85°F or higher.
5. Forced Weight Loss: Athletes should never be required to wear plastic suits during workouts in hot conditions, whether conducted indoors or outdoors.

## Recognizing Clinical Syndromes

1. Heat Exhaustion - This condition is marked by weakness, excessive sweating, and often a headache. Symptoms typically improve within a few minutes when the individual is cooled with fans and given small amounts of fluid to drink.
2. Heat Stroke - This condition is marked by unconsciousness and dry, hot skin, accompanied by an elevated body temperature. It is a medical emergency requiring immediate action. The patient should be cooled quickly using ice or cold cloths. Do not remove from ice bath until body temperature is stabilized. Arrange transport to a hospital.  
***When in doubt, always treat as heat stroke.***

## State Football Championship Site Rotation

Final round games will be played at a site determined by the IHSAA Board of Directors. When possible, state championship games will be held at Idaho's three university facilities.

## Prioritized Factors for Selecting Milk Bowl Sites, Dates, and Times

1. A region may not host in consecutive years unless both teams are from that region. .
2. Site Availability
  - a. University of Idaho: A maximum of three games per day may be scheduled at the Kibbie Dome. Final game times and dates will depend on the U of I's football schedule.
  - b. Boise State University: A maximum of two games per day may be scheduled at Albertson Stadium. Final game times and dates will depend on BSU's football schedule. The 4A, 3A, 2A, and 1A Milk Bowl games in District III will be held at an area high school. If a 4A, 3A, 2A, or 1A game can be scheduled at BSU in conjunction with a 6A or 5A game, it may be scheduled accordingly.
  - c. Idaho State University: A maximum of four games per day may be scheduled at the ICCU Dome. Final game times and dates will depend on ISU's football schedule.
3. The team traveling the farthest will have the first choice of available game times.
4. Games will not be scheduled to start after 9:00 pm.

IHSAA representatives will determine the sites, dates, and times for each Milk Bowl game, with final decisions made on the Sunday before the state championship game.

## Home/Visiting Team Designation for Championship Games

The team traveling the greatest distance to the site will be designated the visiting team and will wear white jerseys. Visiting team will be assigned the largest locker room, equipped with the most showers and restrooms, and placed on the same side of the field as the press box. If both teams are from the same city, the higher-seeded team will be designated the home team. Locker room assignments, sideline placement, and student sections will be determined at the discretion of the site manager.

## 6A / 5A Financial Plan — Semi Final Round

All 6A and 5A games except championship games.

1. Per game reimbursement
  - a. Travel: \$3.00 per mile (one way) towards the cost of transportation regardless of number of buses a school wishes to send.
  - b. Meals and/or lodging: (1) up to 200 miles one way - \$250, (2) 200-300 miles one way - \$500\*, (3) Over 300 miles one way - \$2,000.  
\*Any contest between District II and District III will fall into category 3 due to the type of roads.
2. Trophy and medal costs will be shared by participating schools.
3. Reasonable local expenses - if the game is held in a non-school facility, rent will be paid.
4. IHSAA will receive 15% of gate receipts after sales tax deduction.
5. If the gate receipts are not sufficient to cover the on-site expenses, the travel reimbursement will be proportionate to the income.
6. Net receipts from all semi-final games will be divided among participating schools. Each participating school will receive one share for each game it plays.
7. The IHSAA will be in control of all media rights for the rounds of 8 and 16. All media money from these rounds will be returned to the participating schools.

#### **4A/ 3A / 2A / 1A Financial Plans – Quarter/Semi Final Rounds**

1. Plan when the game is played at a host site:  
The following expenses will be deducted before the revenue is shared.
  - a. Percentage to State Association (a) 10%, (b) 15%, (c) 20%
  - b. Officials
  - c. Percentage of cost of awards based upon the number of games in playoff
  - d. \$3 per mile one way for traveling team
  - e. Sales tax
  - f. The host team will be allowed up to \$400-4A/3A, \$300-2A/1A for on-site expenses.  
The remaining revenue will be divided as follows:

|                  |                                                                                                       |     |
|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| a. \$1-\$1000    | Home Team                                                                                             | 45% |
|                  | Visiting Team                                                                                         | 55% |
| b. \$1001-\$4000 | If travel is over 200 miles, teams split 35-65 in favor of traveling team; otherwise, split is 45-55. |     |
| c. Over \$4000   | Home Team                                                                                             | 48% |
|                  | Visiting Team                                                                                         | 52% |
2. Plan to be used when the contest is played at a site other than home site:  
The following expenses will be deducted before the revenue is shared.
  - a. Percentage to State Association (a) 10%, (b) 15%, (c) 20%
  - b. Officials
  - c. Percentages awards costs based upon the number of games in playoff
  - d. \$3 per mile one way for traveling team
  - e. Sales TaxThe remaining revenue will be divided as follows:
  - a. 0-100 mile difference - 50/50
  - b. 101-200 mile difference - 45/55
  - c. 201-up mile difference - 35/65
3. If the gate receipts are not sufficient to cover the on-site expenses, the travel reimbursement will be proportionate to the income.
4. The IHSAA will be in control of all media rights for the round of 16. All media money from this round will be returned to the participating schools.

#### **Financial Plan for Championship Finals**

The following financial plan is for the state football championship finals only.

Meal allowance based upon one way mileage:

|    | <u>0-200</u> | <u>201-300</u> | <u>301-450</u> | <u>Over 450</u> |
|----|--------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 1A | \$150        | \$500          | \$750          | \$900           |
| 2A | 150          | 500            | 750            | 900             |
| 3A | 240          | 800            | 1,200          | 1,600           |
| 4A | 270          | 900            | 1,400          | 1,900           |
| 5A | 300          | 1,000          | 1,600          | 2,200           |
| 6A | 360          | 1,200          | 2,000          | 2,800           |

In addition to the above amount, each school that travels will receive \$3.00 per mile one way for travel. Example: Moscow travels to Pocatello for final round. Moscow is 524 miles from Pocatello. Therefore, they would receive  $524 \times 3 = \$1572$  for mileage. Because they are a 4A school traveling over 450 miles, they would receive \$2200 additional.

The Board has no adopted formula for division of gate revenues for doubleheaders and tripleheaders. The Board will review each on an individual basis.

#### **Football Preliminary Playoff Sites**

The Board of Directors will approve the sites, dates, and times for all football playoff games during its January board meeting. In all playoff rounds, the designation of a host team does not guarantee the game will be played on that team's home field

The host school may hold the game at its own facility or at another location that meets IHSAA state playoff requirements. However, schools must obtain IHSAA approval before scheduling playoff games at the ICCU Dome, Albertsons Stadium, or the Kibbie Dome.

#### **Playoff Site Requirements**

Each district Board of Control must submit a list to the IHSAA of all potential sites that meet the requirements for hosting state football playoffs.

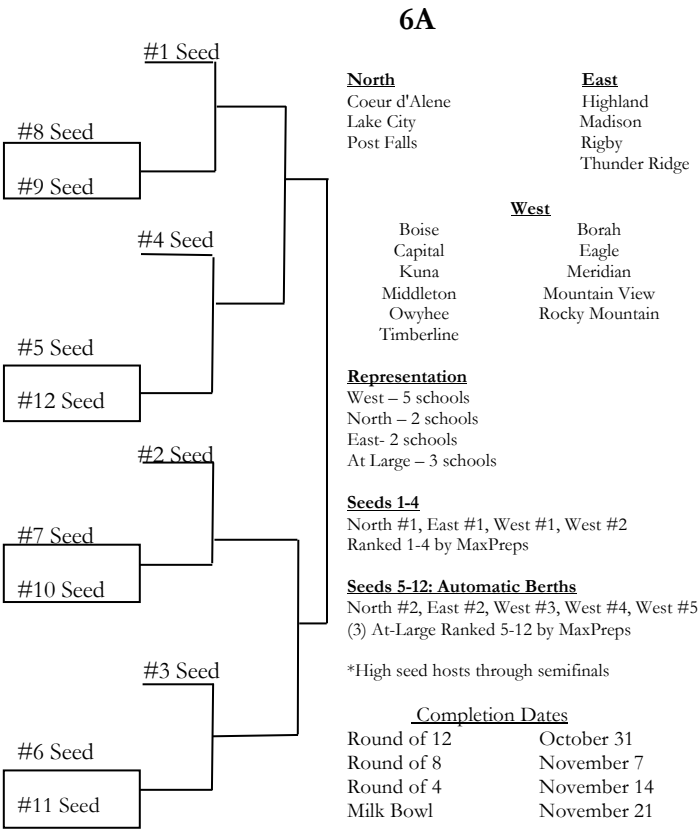
1. Adequate parking
2. Adequate spectator seating for the following classifications:
  - o 1A: Home team: 200; Visiting team: 150
  - o 2A: Home team: 200; Visiting team: 150
  - o 3A: Home team: 400; Visiting team: 200
  - o 4A: Home team: 600; Visiting team: 250
  - o 5A: Home team: 800; Visiting team: 300
  - o 6A: Home team: 1000; Visiting team: 500
3. Appropriate number of sites for ticket sales.
4. Football playing field area prepared to meet the existing weather conditions.
5. Adequate locker rooms with restrooms and showers with handicapped accessibility. Player restrooms shall be separate from spectators.
6. Adequate number of restrooms for spectators.
7. Adequate security to maintain crowd control. Playoff site management shall take necessary measures to prohibit home team fans from being in the visiting team spectator area.
8. The football field must be enclosed by a barrier positioned at least seven yards from the out-of-bounds lines. This barrier may consist of fencing, rope, or other safe materials that do not pose a risk to spectators. It must stand at least 36 inches high and be actively monitored by game security to ensure that no fans or spectators come within seven yards of the playing field.

#### **Pre-Tournament Practice**

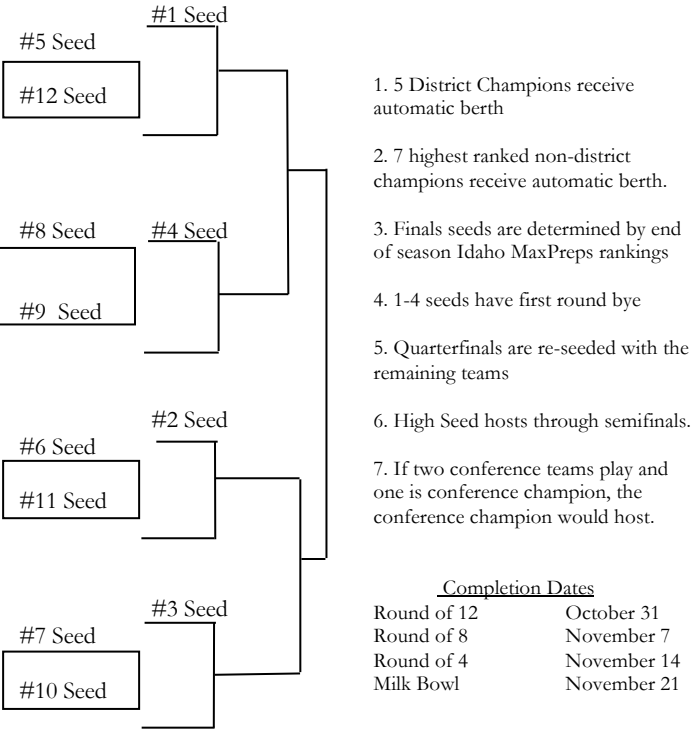
Teams are not allowed to practice in the ICCU Dome, Kibbie Dome, or Albertsons Stadium during the state playoffs, except for the championship game. For the championship, if one team has used the facility during the current season and the other has not, the team without prior access may request a practice opportunity from the tournament director. Approval is subject to facility availability, as determined by the tournament manager. If approved, practice will be scheduled only for the day before the championship game.

2026 Brackets

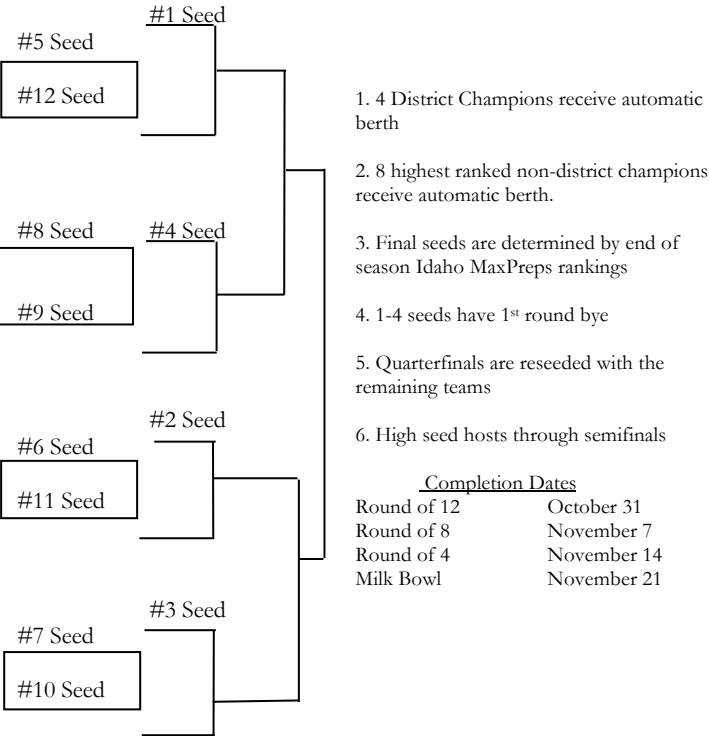
The top team in the bracket will be designated as the home team and will have the first option to provide halftime performances.



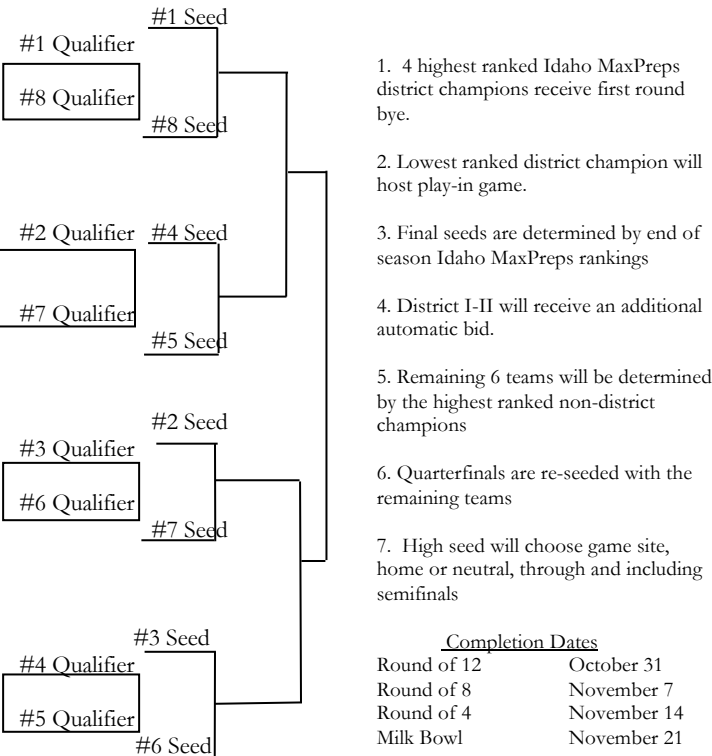
4A



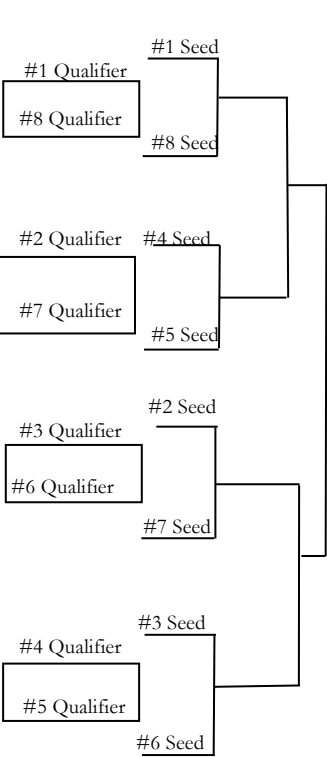
5A



3A



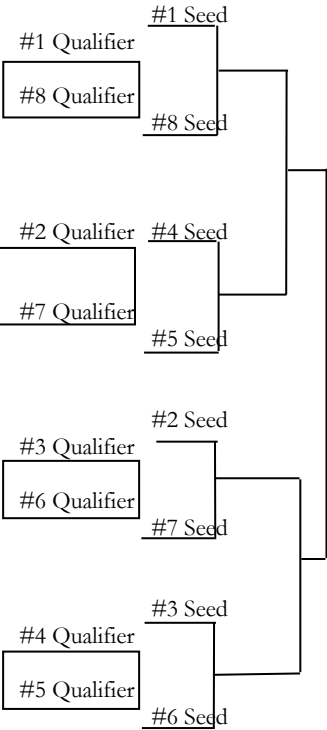
2A 8 Man



- 1. Seeding will be determined by the end of season Idaho MaxPreps rankings
- 2. Top 4 seeded conference champions receive a first round bye.
- 3. The 5<sup>th</sup> seeded conference champion will earn a berth to the round of 12.
- 4. Remaining 7 bids will be determined by highest final Idaho MaxPreps rankings.
- 5. Quarterfinals are re-seeded with the remaining teams
- 6. High Seed hosts through semifinals. If a conference champion is playing a non-conference champion in the quarterfinals, the conference champion would host.

| Completion Dates |             |
|------------------|-------------|
| Round of 12      | October 31  |
| Round of 8       | November 7  |
| Round of 4       | November 14 |
| Milk Bowl        | November 21 |

1A 8-Man



- 1. Seeding will be determined by the end of season Idaho MaxPreps rankings
- 2. Top 4 seeded conference champions receive a first round bye.
- 3. The 5<sup>th</sup> seeded conference champion will earn a berth to the round of 12.
- 4. Remaining 7 bids will be determined by highest final Idaho MaxPreps rankings.
- 5. Quarterfinals are re-seeded with the remaining teams
- 6. High Seed hosts through semifinals. If a conference champion is playing a non-conference champion in the quarterfinals, the conference champion would host.

| Completion Dates |             |
|------------------|-------------|
| Round of 12      | October 31  |
| Round of 8       | November 7  |
| Round of 4       | November 14 |
| Milk Bowl        | November 21 |