



NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2020

[Classification, postseason alignments set for 2021-23 school years](#)

TSSAA, as it does every two years, solicited enrollment figures in September from its member schools throughout the Volunteer State. This year, however, was like no previous time.

[Read More](#)

[Board of Control holds November meeting at Siegel High School](#)

The TSSAA Board of Control met on Thursday, November 12 at Siegel High School in Murfreesboro.

[Read More](#)

[Regional meetings held virtually in 2020](#)

The membership voted to recommend two proposals to the Legislative Council, while one, a change to high school eligibility rules involving 7th graders, lacked the support of the majority.

[Read More](#)

[Robertsville Middle's Hinton serves as role model among TMSAA administrators](#)

Hinton's grandparents stretch their roots back to Oak Ridge around World War II, and his family has made generational treks through the city's school system in the ensuing decades.

[Read More](#)

[2020 Tennessee Titans Mr. Football Semifinalists announced](#)

A committee of statewide sports writers selected winners based on performance in the 2020 regular season. Academics and character were also taken into consideration. High school head coaches and members of the media nominated the finalists.

[Read More](#)

[Long-time Manchester official honored for Distinguished Service](#)

Major Shelton has dedicated nearly 50 years to officiating basketball and baseball in Tennessee.

[Read More](#)

[BlueCross Bowl Supports Healthy Competition, Public Health During 2020 Playoffs](#)

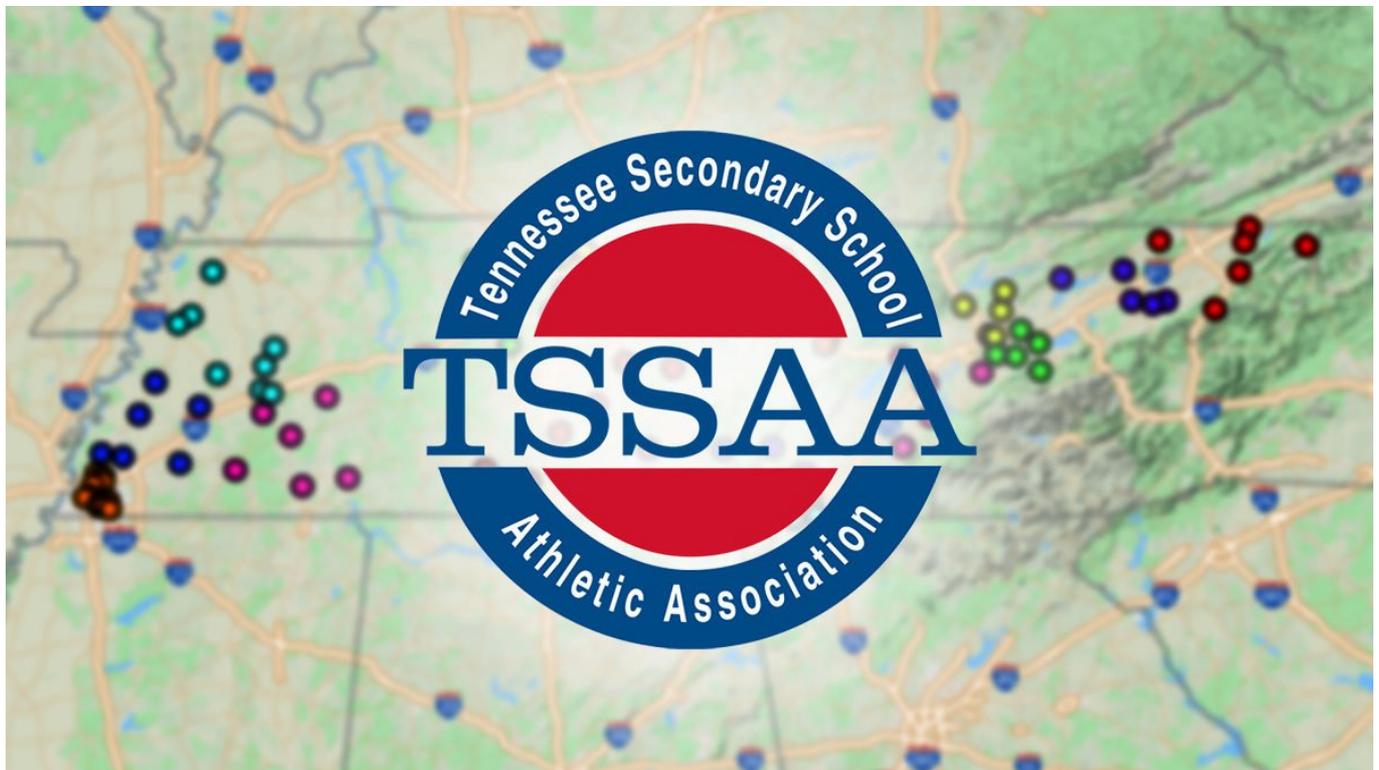
BlueCross is also excited to announce a fresh new look for the BlueCross Bowl this year, with a redesigned logo created to capture the energy of the games.

[Read More](#)

Call for Submissions

We want to include your thoughts in the monthly TSSAA Newsletter! Do you have 50-500 words to share on the topic of **school administrators as role models**? We welcome submissions from principals, athletic administrators, coaches and students! Consider sharing your thoughts, essays or even poems for an upcoming issue. Please send submissions in Microsoft Word format to mgillespie@tssaa.org.

TSSAA continues its support of the **National SAT/ACT Prep Project** through the NFHS and eKnowledge which allows any Tennessee student to receive a 95% discount on SAT or ACT prep courses. This is a community-service, non-profit project and all student fees are reinvested to improve the program and reach more families. The project has more than 45,000 five-star reviews and has already assisted nearly 300,000 families. Learn more at <https://eknowledge.com/TSSAA>.



Sports News

General News

Classification, postseason alignments set for 2021-23 school years

Schools see significant classification changes for upcoming two-year cycle

November 6, 2020

Bernard Childress' history stretches a quarter-century with the Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association.

Championship relocations. Playoff expansions. Public schools with private schools; vice versa.

But Childress, TSSAA's veteran executive director, doesn't have any basis for something quite like this: Calculating classifications based off submitted enrollment numbers amidst a global pandemic with schools throughout the state of Tennessee operating in a bevy of models, from in-classroom settings to fully virtual to hybrid models blending classroom and online learning.

The result, however, is the two-year classifications and expanding championship offerings in TSSAA's new Class A, AA, AAA and AAAA in basketball, as well as baseball and softball. An additional class was also added in Track and Field.

View: [District/Region Alignments for 2021-23](#)

"I think our schools have been looking at it for quite some time, looking at reclassification, and it is the biggest thing that we're responsible for and that we do, is we try always to create a level playing field as much as possible," Childress said. "There are huge gaps in enrollments in our schools. Maybe when you go from AA to AAA, just those gaps in enrollments were something that schools wanted to try to get a little bit closer together if we possibly could.

"When we went to four classes, it didn't change as much as we thought. It closed the gaps some but not near as much as what some schools would like to see. But what this does, it gives more schools a chance to compete in the regular season and advance in the postseason."

TSSAA, as it does every two years, solicited enrollment figures in September from its member schools throughout the Volunteer State. This year, however, was like no previous time.

Closing out a year in which the TSSAA suspended the girls' state basketball tournament while in MTSU's Glass House the second week of March, due to COVID-19, and ultimately shelved all winter and spring championships, enrollment figures became one more obstacle.

Sure, the numbers are submitted by each respective school to the TSSAA and verified by filings with the state's Department of Education. Still, as Childress noted, some schools literally had shifting metrics up until the evening that numbers were due to be submitted. But absent the latest data collection, schools would have entered into competition in spring 2023 with classifications still

based on enrollment figures collected in fall 2016.

“It was very, very tedious, but I will tell you, how our administrators and heads of schools, as well as all of the local boards of education, and public schools, really worked hard to get us the number needed and the form was remarkable,” Childress said. “They really worked hard to try to make sure they gave us the same number they submitted to the State Department of Education. In some cases, it was all the way up until the day before we released the splits that everyone felt comfortable with some local school systems' numbers. In my years at TSSAA, this has been the most difficult time in ever getting enrollments. We feel comfortable; we talked to every school after they submitted their numbers.”

Perhaps the two main points of TSSAA's latest enrollment numbers and classification expansion for basketball and spring team sports are these: it's a two-year system, with the TSSAA Board of Control voting in late-July, mindful of the pandemic, to revisit these figures again in two years; Tennessee, as population density goes amongst its high schools, has a large number of schools clustered between the 400- to 1,200-student ranges, or what will be Class AA and Class AAA under the new parameters.

“Without a doubt, this does give more schools an opportunity,” Childress said. “I'm sure we're going to have some schools that advance further in the postseason than they've ever advanced before. We saw that most recently in soccer, when we expanded it to three classes several years ago.”

While there will be some districts with as many as seven members, most districts are being reshaped into groups of five schools with an eye on curtailing unnecessary travel – something done with both students' safety and school costs in mind.

“Anytime you expand classifications, what we are really concerned with and struggle with in our office is districts and regions and travel,” added Childress. “You want to try to minimize travel as much as possible during regular-season play. The more classes you have, the more difficult it is to do that.”

“But we do the best we can and hopefully when everyone reviews the plans, schools will realize we have tried to keep them in close proximity with schools in their area as much as possible.”

As noted, these alignments will take effect in the fall of 2021 and stand for two years until they are revisited again by TSSAA and its Board of Control. School leaders have an opportunity to appeal their placement to the Board of Control at its upcoming Nov. 12 meeting at the Siegel High School lecture hall.

AUTHOR

John Brice



General News

Meeting Agendas/Minutes News

Board of Control holds November meeting at Siegel High School

Appeals heard from schools regarding district and region alignments for next classification cycle

November 12, 2020

The TSSAA Board of Control met on Thursday, November 12 at Siegel High School in Murfreesboro.

The Board heard an update on the recent fall sport tournament events in golf, volleyball, girls' soccer, cross country and the upcoming cheer/dance and state football championships.

The Board approved a proposal from Sullivan South High School that the region basketball tournaments be played at the higher seed's home court for the entire tournament during the 2020-21 school year due to COVID-19. The Board also voted that schools will play district tournament games at the higher seed's home court.

The Board of Control took action to welcome two new schools to the association.

West Ridge High School is a new school scheduled to open in August 2021 in Blountville, as Sullivan County Schools consolidate the schools at Sullivan Central, Sullivan North, and Sullivan South. They were approved for membership by the Board. West Ridge was included in the upcoming two-year classification cycle and initially placed in Class 5A in football based on the projected enrollment submitted to the state office of 1448 students for the 2021-22 school year. After hearing from the principal of the new school, the Board voted that the projection should only be based on currently available information and not be influenced by anticipated reductions in community population. The enrollment figure accepted by the Board was 1545 which will place the school in Class 6A in football. West Ridge was already in the largest class in all other sports.

The Board approved the request of United Christian Academy for TSSAA membership. It is a small Category 2 independent school with approximately 25-30 students in grades 9-12. They plan to compete in DII in bowling, cross country, golf, tennis, and track and field. The Board also approved their request to form a cooperative agreement with Bradley Central High School since the closest independent school to them is in the Chattanooga area.

Multiple appeals were presented to the Board from member schools in regards to their placement in districts and regions for the next classification cycle (2021-22 through 2022-23). The minutes from the meeting and results of all appeals are contained in the attachment below.

Documents



General News

Meeting Agendas/Minutes News

Regional meetings held virtually in 2020

November 4, 2020

For the first time in the association's 95 year history, the annual meeting of the member schools where the business of recommending bylaw changes and electing representatives for the organization's Board of Control and Legislative Council was held in an online format. Despite being online, the Regional Meetings on Wednesday, Nov. 4, 2020 were scheduled in the traditional way and brought together schools in three separate sessions, one for each Grand Division of the state.

Nominees for open seats were submitted by the membership over a three week period, from Oct. 1 to Oct. 23, and placed on an online ballot along with the three legislative proposals under consideration. Voting took place in a seven-hour window on Wednesday, Nov. 4.

In the four contested elections for seats on the Board of Control and Legislative Council, Jody Wright of Fulton High School defeated JD Lambert of Knoxville Central High School (Board of Control, Athletic District 2); Dennis Goodwin of DCA defeated Mike Ellson of CPA (Board of Control, Middle Tenn. Independent Rep.); Angie Cass of Ooltewah High School defeated Autumn O'Bryan of Cleveland High School (Legislative Council, Athletic District 3); and Dan Black of Bradford High School defeated Jeremy Davidson of Westview High School (Legislative Council, Athletic District 8).

The membership voted to recommend two proposals to the Legislative Council, while one, a change to high school eligibility rules involving 7th graders, lacked the support of the majority.

The full results appear in the minutes attached below.

Documents

[2020 Regional Meetings Minutes \(PDF\)](#)



Distinguished Service

Robertsville Middle's Hinton serves as role model among TMSAA administrators

Oak Ridge-native and former basketball coach now serves as athletic director

November 13, 2020

Oak Ridge runs as deep in the veins of Scott Hinton as does the 'Secret City's' mythical reputation for its help in the Manhattan Project to assist the United States' triumph in World War II.

Hinton's grandparents stretch their roots back to Oak Ridge around World War II, and his family has made generational treks through the city's school system in the ensuing decades.

Now athletics director at Robertsville Middle School in Oak Ridge, Hinton is being honored by the TSSAA as one of the ten 2020-21 recipients of the organization's prestigious Distinguished Service Award for his selfless work in giving back to the youth of his hometown.

"I knew when I was in high school that I wanted to teach and wanted to coach basketball," said Hinton, an eighth-grade American History teacher who began student-coaching as a freshman at Oak Ridge in the mid-1990s. "Even though I wasn't good enough to play, I was really good friends with Matt McMahon, now the Murray State head coach, and Tim Kaine, we're friends from Oak Ridge.

"I knew just having that passion and being around those guys that I wanted to teach and give back to others."

Hinton's seen his roles intertwined with youth athletics in his community since the early 2000s, when at the behest of another mentor, current Coalfield basketball coach David Scott, Hinton helped resurrect the Robertsville Middle School girls' basketball program. Hinton served as head coach of the Lady Rams through the 2012-13 year, when he added the dual role of school athletics director.

He's not looked back since that time. In fact, Hinton and wife, Tonya, are enjoying seeing their oldest son, Hunter, in school at Robertsville; 7-year-old Hayden is a few years from what could be a similar path.

"One of the cool things was winning the area tournament title in 2009," said Hinton, who also counts former Oak Ridge coach and principal Chuck Carringer, as well as the late Stan Ballard, among his key basketball mentors. "We beat Norris, and we had some battles with them and lost a couple times in the regular season and then beat them in the area tournament in 2009. It was the first time since becoming a middle school in 1995 that we ever won the area title.

As athletics director, aside from working to enrich his students' lives in the classroom, Hinton focuses on alleviating stress for all the coaches at Robertsville. It's been a particularly challenging, and rewarding, year in that regard for Hinton as everyone navigates the COVID-19 pandemic.



Scott Hinton

“I've kind of grown into the role of athletic director, coming into it as a coach, my biggest thing is I want to take as many administrative things off my coaches' plates as I can,” Hinton said. “What can I do to make their jobs easier? So if that's handling officials, helping with scheduling, whatever it is, I want to do that. At the middle school level, it takes all of us. I want to try to eliminate as many things on their plate and allow them to coach their teams. Because that's what they're hired for.”

Oak Ridge Schools just reintegrated into classrooms at the start of November, and students, teachers and staff alike all are adjusting to the new reality of full hallways in a pandemic year. The fall sports, however, set forth a good model that Hinton hopes can be carried through the remainder of the academic and athletic calendar.

“The biggest thing, I think, that I take a lot of pride in is that we didn't have to shut down any programs,” Hinton said. “We made it through fall football, volleyball, cross country and cheerleading, and we didn't have to shut down for any cases, and I hope we can continue to do that in basketball. We all are seeing the case numbers going up, living kind of one day at a time right now.”

“We didn't have to cancel a single event because of another team or anything. The kids got to play and that's the biggest thing. It was not normal, but nothing is normal right now.”

TSSAA proudly salutes Scott Hinton for his service as a middle school coach and administrator.

AUTHOR

John Brice



Sports News

General News

2020 Tennessee Titans Mr. Football Semifinalists announced

Finalists to be announced on Tuesday, November 17

November 5, 2020

The Tennessee Titans Mr. Football Awards will be presented to the top football players in nine classifications of the Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association on Tuesday, December 8, 2020, at Nissan Stadium in Nashville. For the 19th consecutive year, the top kicker in the state will be recognized with a Mr. Football Award, regardless of classification.

Five semifinalists are announced in this release for each classification and the Kicker of the Year category. There are six classifications in Division I and three in Division II. Three finalists for each category will be announced by Mike Keith on the Titans website at www.titansonline.com on Tuesday, November 17 at 11:00 a.m. CST / 12:00 p.m. EST. The three finalists for each award will be the ones invited to attend the awards luncheon at Nissan Stadium, where the winner of each award will be announced.

A committee of statewide sports writers selected winners based on performance in the 2020 regular season. Academics and character were also taken into consideration. High school head coaches and members of the media nominated the finalists.

"We are very excited and appreciative about being involved with the Tennessee Titans for the 14th consecutive year," stated Bernard Childress, Executive Director of the TSSAA. "They have helped make the recognition of these 50 student-athletes, their families, and schools possible. The sponsorship of the Tennessee Titans Mr. Football Awards and numerous contributions to high schools across the state since the team moved to Tennessee have meant a great deal to the member schools of the TSSAA."

This is the 36th year that the Mr. Football Awards have been presented to Tennessee's best high school football players. A Mr. Football trophy will be presented to the winners of each category. A Mr. Football plaque will be presented to the other two finalists in each category. The other semi-finalists will each receive a certificate.

Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, fewer people will be permitted to attend this year's awards ceremony. More than 100 people, including the 30 finalists, family members, and coaches are expected to attend the 2020 luncheon.

Mike Keith, play-by-play voice of the Tennessee Titans, will emcee the awards presentation. A live videostream of the awards will be provided at www.titansonline.com.

2020 Tennessee Titans Mr. Football Semifinalists

DIVISION I, CLASS 1A

Hunter Frame, South Pittsburg
Kyler Parker, Moore County
Kolbi Stewart, Huntland
Jared Stone, South Pittsburg
Kaden White, Moore County

DIVISION I, CLASS 2A

Blake Carroll, Lewis County
Khalik Ganaway, Peabody
Will Meadows, Meigs County
Kolby Morgan, Oneida
Luke Myers, South Greene

DIVISION I, CLASS 3A

Anthony Brown, Milan
Grey Carroll, Alcoa
Isaiah Cox, Alcoa
Martino Owens, Pearl Cohn
Ty Simpson, Westview

DIVISION I, CLASS 4A

Axel Aldino, DeKalb County
Troy Parker Hughes, Elizabethton
Rivers Hunt, Hardin County
Bryson Rollins, Elizabethton
Jakobe Thomas, Tullahoma

DIVISION I, CLASS 5A

Kalib Fortner, Knoxville Central
Jermarcus Johnson, Henry County
Prince Kollie, David Crockett
Jordyn Potts, Powell
Destin Wade, Summit

DIVISION I, CLASS 6A

Raymond Banner, LaVergne
Jake Briningstool, Ravenwood
Jaxson Campbell, Independence
Jalen Hunt, McMinn County
C.J. Taylor, Warren County

DIVISION II, CLASS A

Jon Lewis, DCA
Na' Kelin McAfee, King's Academy
A.J. Quinn, Davidson Academy
Aaron Smith, Jackson Christian
Griffin Swinea, Davidson Academy

DIVISION II, CLASS AA

Jackson Bradley, Knoxville Webb
Alex Broome, Lipscomb Academy
James Dunn, CAK
Langston Patterson, CPA
Dietrick Pennington, ECS

DIVISION II, CLASS AAA

Michael Dallas, Briarcrest
B.J. Harris, McCallie
Dallan Hayden, CBHS
Elijah Howard, Baylor
D.C. Tabscott, Father Ryan

KICKER OF THE YEAR

Upton Bellenfant, Stewarts Creek
Bryson Flynn, Gatlinburg-Pittman

Teagen Lenderink, Brentwood Academy

Trey Turk, Oakland

Connor Wood, Lexington



Distinguished Service

General News

Officiating News

Long-time Manchester official honored for Distinguished Service

October 16, 2020

The offering of a prayer muted the whistle.

Major Shelton had just made a key decision while officiating a high school game in Chattanooga when the late, great TSSAA Hall of Fame coach Henry Bowles informed Shelton of his intent to lift up Shelton.

“Coach Bowles looked at me when I ran by him,” Shelton said, “ and he said, 'Major, I'm going to go to church tomorrow and pray for you.'”

“You can't tee up a guy who's said he was going to pray for you.”

Shelton's contributions and memories from officiating Tennessee high school sports, primarily basketball and baseball, touch five different decades and nearly total a full 50 years; he's the October recipient of the TSSAA's Distinguished Service Award.

“The kids, the people, the referees, it's just as I said, referees are like a bunch of brothers and sisters,” Shelton explained. “We pick and aggravate each other. One good friend of mine from officiating, we talk on the phone two or three times a week, and during basketball season, four or five times a week. A good friend of mine from Lawrenceburg, Mickey Dunn, he and I talked every week or two during the time he was on chemo, and he was just a real nice guy. He stands out to me as one of the fine coaches I dealt with over the years.”

Shelton is hesitant to recall too many coaches by name. Quite frankly, there are too many for Shelton to list. It's byproduct of what he estimates as between 2,500 and 3,000 officiating assignments, from standard prep girls' and boys' games; tournament quadruple-headers and plenty of collegiate basketball assignments along the way, including NCAA Division I work in the Ohio Valley Conference.

He's done it all with his wife, Debbie, by his side the past 48 years while they also were raising three sons. Too, Shelton helped operate his dairy farm for nearly two decades when he wasn't amassing between 250,000-300,000 miles and “wearing out two or three cars” calling games.

“I was a dairy farmer for 20 years,” said Shelton, who has worked TSSAA State Championships in both basketball and baseball. “I was milking around 125 cows, and we ran 400 to 500 Holstein heifers at the time. Seven days a week, 365, 366 days a year.”

Shelton's lifetime of friendships with TSSAA legends Burrell Crowell, Ray Moffett and Gabby Street transcend the cramped gyms and worn whistles.



Major Shelton

Yet the former Coffee County basketball and football player Shelton hasn't just impacted youth in an official's uniform; he's also a retired Coffee County High School educator including stints in administration and as athletic director.

Shelton's memories from his time directing the county's alternative school spark memories equally vivid to him recalling the night in Chattanooga when former high school All-Americans C.J. Black of Brainerd and Vincent Yarbrough of Cleveland squared off. Black dunked so hard he broke the backboard and the game was continued 24 hours later.

"You take a kid that maybe nobody has shown interest in and show interest in them and push them, you'll be surprised what you get out of them," Shelton, an MTSU graduate, said of his time as principal at the alternative school. "I had good people helping me out, and we had a four-year period where if we got them early enough, we got 100% of them graduated.

"It makes you feel good to see a kid walk the (graduation) line, get done with the ceremony and then come back to see you. We had a kid, he wanted to go into the service, into the U.S. Marines, and he was almost 18 when we got him. I worked with him daily. He finally graduated, goes into the Marines and his first stop after boot camp, he came straight to school in his full dress uniform."

TSSAA proudly salutes Major Shelton for his decades of service to the schools and student-athletes in Tennessee as a contest official.

AUTHOR

John Brice



Sports News

General News

BlueCross Bowl Supports Healthy Competition, Public Health During 2020 Playoffs

New BlueCross Bowl branding unveiled

November 11, 2020

As playoffs begin, Tennessee high school teams once again have their sights on the BlueCross Bowl in Cookeville, and BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee is supporting TSSAA efforts to ensure the health and safety of all involved in the upcoming events.

The BlueCross Bowl includes 9 championship games, one for each division and class of the TSSAA high school football system. **BlueCross will be providing masks to players, coaches, officials and staff** in advance of the games. TSSAA COVID-19 regulations will be implemented throughout the BlueCross Bowl to ensure fans can enjoy the sporting event in a safe and clean environment.

“We appreciate the preparations of TSSAA and its member schools to compete as safely as possible throughout this 2020 football season, as teamwork and resilience took on a whole new meaning and importance,” said Henry Smith, senior vice president and chief marketing officer for BlueCross. “The BlueCross Bowl Championship recognizes the ‘best of the best’ from hundreds of teams and thousands of student athletes who learn important life lessons in pursuit of their goals, and I’m sure this year will be even more special for the teams who compete.”

BlueCross is also excited to announce a fresh new look for the BlueCross Bowl this year, with a redesigned logo created to capture the energy of the games.

A media toolkit with the new logo is available at <https://bcbstnews.com/BCBowl/> and includes high resolution files, logo usage guidelines, and talking points.

For more information about the games, visit <https://tssaasports.com/football/>.

About BlueCross®

BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee is a taxpaying, not-for-profit health plan serving more than 3.4 million members in Tennessee and around the country. The Chattanooga-based company was founded in 1945 and is celebrating its 75th anniversary of bringing peace of mind to its members and local communities. BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee Inc. is an independent licensee of the BlueCross BlueShield Association. For more information, visit the company's news center at bcbstnews.com.