



2024

#LTABFLA:

## TOURNAMENT RULES & GUIDELINES

As of 01.10.2024

*Please direct all questions and inquiries to [bluapple@jasontaylorfoundation.com](mailto:bluapple@jasontaylorfoundation.com).*

### OVERVIEW

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Dubbed the “Super Bowl of Poetry,” **LTABFLA** is a spoken word poetry tournament featuring smaller “bouts” held across the region where school-based teams compete together and individually, in front of their peers, families and community audiences with self-authored poetry. The various bouts lead to the Team Finals, where the state’s top youth poetry team is crowned. Regardless of the scores, the students and their stories become the voice of their city and ultimately, their generation.

While the festival activates programming through a competition, **LTABFLA**’s purpose is **NOT** the competition, but rather, it is:

- A vehicle to engage young people and audiences in creating authentic narratives to re-imagine the self and one another.
- A platform for “spoken word” or “Hip-Hop poetry,” the voice of this generation’s students and writers, providing an opportunity to artistically share their real-life experiences.
- A community of individuals, which brings together students, teachers and audiences from all walks of life, developing mutual respect and tolerance for difference.

**LTABFLA** was adapted from the powerful, sustainable **LTAB** model, founded in Chicago in 2001, and now in sites across North America.

“The point is not the points, the point is the Poetry.”





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## **TIMELINE & FESTIVAL SCHEDULE**

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Saturday	December 16	Poetry & Leadership Conference “Crossing the Street”
Saturday	January 10	LTABFLA Registration Opens
Thursday	January 25	LTABFLA New Coaches’ Meeting
Wednesday	January 31	LTABFLA Veterans Coaches’ Meeting
Friday	February 16	Deadline to Register for LTABFLA; all forms and fees due
Saturday	March 2	Firecracker & Dynamite Slam (Alternative date March 9)
Tuesday	March 12	Preliminary Bouts
Saturday	April 6	Team & Individual Semifinal Bouts
Thursday	April 9	Coaches’ Slam
Thursday	April 12	bluapple Alumni Open Mic
Wednesday	April 17	Individual Finals
Saturday	April 20	Team Finals
Friday	April 26	South Florida Youth Poet Laureate Book Release Party

## **NOTES:**

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## COACH RESPONSIBILITIES

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- Registering teams (includes completing and submitting forms and paying registration fee)
- Coordinating and moderating practices
- Preparing poets for bouts
- Procuring videoed poems and/or transportation for participating poets and entourage
- Encouraging the mission of the Omari Hardwick blueapple Poetry Network and LTABFLA

## TEAM REQUIREMENTS

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- A registering team must be affiliated with a high school, and each school may field only one team. Community organizations and afterschool programs may not register a team unless directly partnered with and providing services for a school that does not have another team participating in the festival.
- A minimum of four and a maximum of ten high school poets actively enrolled at the registering school. Any student seeking exemption from this rule (e.g. a home-schooled student desiring to compete with his/her local school) must do so in writing by the registration deadline of **Friday, February 16, 2024**.
- One coach/club sponsor who is affiliated with the registering school (i.e. a teacher, faculty member, or other similarly placed adult)
- Minimum of four original individual poems (PLUS one original poem in the event of a tie breaker) that have not been performed in any previous year's LTABFLA competition.
- Minimum of one (1) four-person original group piece that has not been performed in any previous year's LTABFLA competition.
- Payment of \$200 registration fee per team due **Friday, February 16, 2024**
- Attendance and participation in the **Poetry & Leadership Conference on December 16, 2023**





## COMPETITION FORMAT

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- The LTABFLA competition is a series of poetry “bouts” consisting of four schools competing against each other in five equally weighted rounds. Each round features one poem from every team competing in that bout.
- Each bout will have a host, bout manager, timekeeper and scorekeeper (two or more of these roles may be fulfilled by the same person) and DJ, all of who are assigned by the Jason Taylor Foundation.
- The first four rounds of a bout occur in a pre-determined order. Teams draw for position upon checking in to each bout.
- The first four rounds of each bout will feature one poem from each competing school. At least three of the poems performed by each team over the first four rounds will feature a different individual poet performing their own work. The other poem in these first four rounds (which may occur in any of the first four rounds) may be a group piece poem (featuring 2-4 poets) or may be an individual poem. The coach of each team must submit the name and order of each performing poet for the first four rounds while checking in their team prior to the start of each bout.
- The order for the fifth round of each bout will be determined by a random draw at the conclusion of the fourth round, led by the bout manager. The coach, or one member from each team, will participate in the draw. This is also the appropriate time for coaches of participating teams to discuss protests, infractions or any questions that may exist.
- The fifth and final round of each bout is the group piece round. In this round, exactly four (4) poets from each team will perform an original group piece. Scoring for the group piece round is exactly the same as the first four rounds, as each round is equally weighted.

*< COMPETITION FORMAT continued on next page >*





## COMPETITION FORMAT CONT'D

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- No student may appear on stage more than two (2) times in a given bout. Additionally, no student may perform more than one individual poem in a bout (a student may perform one (1) individual poem and participate in one (1) group piece OR a student may participate in two (2) group pieces). No team may perform more than one group piece over the first four rounds (teams may choose to not perform any group pieces over the first four rounds). Any team that violates this rule will face a 10.0 point penalty applied to their total score for each infraction, counted by student and by poem (e.g. a poem featuring two students who are on stage for the third time in a bout will incur a 20.0 point penalty, 10.0 points for each student). If a team only has four members, they cannot perform a group piece during the first four rounds as it will put them in automatic violation of this rule.

## SCORING

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- A mixed panel of **five community members judge each bout**. Judges should not be affiliated in any way with the teams they are judging. Should a participating coach or team member be affiliated with a judge, they should reveal this to the bout manager immediately.
- Each poem (including group pieces) is judged on a scale of 0.0 to 10.0 (to one decimal place) by each of the five judges.
- For each poem, the **highest score and the lowest score are dropped** and the median (three middle) scores are totaled. Due to this, the highest point total any poem can receive is 30.0. For example:

JUDGE 1	JUDGE 2	JUDGE 3	JUDGE 4	JUDGE 5	TOTAL
9.3	8.7	9.6	10.0	10.0	28.9

- A team's scores earned during each round are totaled so that each team will finish the bout with a score between 0.0 and 150.0. At the conclusion of each preliminary bout, each team is assigned a **rank of 1 through 4**. The team with the highest cumulative point total at the conclusion of the bout receives a bout rank of 1. A bout rank of 2 is assigned to the team that finishes with the second highest cumulative point total, and so on. Tiebreakers are discussed later in these rules.
- Refer to Figure 1 on page 6 for an example of a fully completed scoresheet.



**FIGURE 1 – SAMPLE SCORESHEET (COMPLETED)**

**LOUDER THAN A BOMB FLORIDA - PRELIMINARY BOUT SCORE SHEET**

BOUOT INFO		FINAL RANK	TEAM DRAW	RND 1 SCORE	RND 2 SCORE	RND 3 SCORE	RND 4 SCORE	SUB TOTAL	TEAM RANK	RND 5 SCORE	FINAL SCORE
DATE:	4/9/15	3	A Dan Marino HS	27.4	24.9	28.7	28.5	109.5	2	26.2	135.7
TIME:	11:30am	2	B Zach Thomas Acad	25.4	28.9	26.2	26.3	106.8	3	29.0	135.8
SITE:	Paradise Live	1	C Jason Taylor HS	27.9	28.6	29.7	26.6	112.8	1	28.0	140.8
MGR:	S. Levit	4	D Sam Madison Charter	0.0	27.6	28.0	27.7	83.3	4	29.0	112.3

**ROUND ONE - INDIVIDUAL**

TEAM NAME	POET NAME	TIME	LOW	HI	SUB	DEDUCT	TOTAL
A Dan Marino HS	Dan Marino	3.13	9.1 9.2 9.3 9.4 9.5	9.5	27.9	0.5	27.4
B Zach Thomas Acad	Zach Thomas	3.54	9.1 9.2 9.3 9.4 9.5	9.5	27.9	2.5	25.4
C Jason Taylor HS	Jason Taylor	3.09	8.7 9.2 9.3 9.4 9.9	9.9	27.9	0.0	27.9
D Sam Madison Charter	Sam Madison	5.04	9.1 9.2 9.3 9.4 9.5	9.5	27.9	0.0	27.9
Individual Poet	Oronde Gadsden	4.01	8.3 8.9 9.3 9.3 9.4	9.4	27.5	3.0	24.5

**ROUND TWO - INDIVIDUAL**

TEAM NAME	POET NAME	TIME	LOW	HI	SUB	DEDUCT	TOTAL
B Zach Thomas Acad	Larry Izzo	3.09	9.5 9.5 9.5 9.9 10	10	28.9	0.0	28.9
C Jason Taylor HS	Daryl Gardner	2.99	9.3 9.3 9.5 9.8 9.8	9.8	28.6	0.0	28.6
D Sam Madison Charter	Patrick Surtain	3.23	9.3 9.4 9.5 9.7 9.9	9.9	28.6	1.0	27.6
A Dan Marino HS	Damon Heard	1.11	9.2 9.2 9.5 9.7 9.7	9.7	28.4	3.5	24.9
Individual Poet					0.0	0.0	0.0

**ROUND THREE - INDIVIDUAL**

TEAM NAME	POET NAME	TIME	LOW	HI	SUB	DEDUCT	TOTAL
C Jason Taylor HS	Tim Bowers	2.95	9.6 9.8 9.9 10 10	10	29.7	0.0	29.7
D Sam Madison Charter	Tim Jacobs	3.24	9.7 9.4 9.8 9.8 10	10	29.0	1.0	28.0
A Dan Marino HS	Jay Fiedler	3.09	9.4 9.4 9.6 9.7 9.8	9.8	28.7	0.0	28.7
B Zach Thomas Acad	Derrick Rodgers	3.59	9.1 9.3 9.7 9.7 9.7	9.7	28.7	2.5	26.2
Individual Poet					0.0	0.0	0.0

**ROUND FOUR - INDIVIDUAL**

TEAM NAME	POET NAME	TIME	LOW	HI	SUB	DEDUCT	TOTAL
D Sam Madison Charter	Brian Walker	3.25	9.5 9.5 9.5 9.7 10	10	28.7	1.0	27.7
A Dan Marino HS	Bernie Kassar	3.19	9.5 9.6 9.7 9.7 9.9	9.9	29.0	0.5	28.5
B Zach Thomas Acad	Twan Russell	3.56	9.4 9.5 9.5 9.8 10	10	28.8	2.5	26.3
C Jason Taylor HS	Trace Armstrong	3.93	9.5 9.5 9.7 9.9 10	10	29.1	2.5	26.6
Individual Poet					0.0	0.0	0.0

**ROUND FIVE - TEAM ROUND**

TEAM NAME	TIME	LOW	HI	SUB	DEDUCT	TOTAL
4 Sam Madison Charter	3.09	9.6 9.6 9.6 9.8 9.8	9.8	29.0	0.0	29.0
3 Zach Thomas Acad	3.11	9.5 9.8 9.8 9.9 9.9	9.9	29.5	0.5	29.0
2 Dan Marino HS	3.21	8.9 9 9 9.2 9.3	9.3	27.2	1.0	26.2
1 Jason Taylor HS	3.11	9.3 9.4 9.5 9.6 9.7	9.7	28.5	0.5	28.0

Harvey Greene  
PRINT NAME OF SCOREKEEPER

Harvey Greene  
SIGNATURE OF SCOREKEEPER

4/9/15  
DATE





## ADVANCING – INDY COMPETITION

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- While LTABFLA is a team competition, outstanding individual performances are recognized.
- After the completion of all preliminary bouts, each individual poet's scores are totaled.
- The top 24 poets with the highest combined score from the preliminary bouts will advance to be considered Indy Semifinalists.

**\*\*\*PLEASE NOTE\*\*\*** *There is not a separate Indy Semifinals bout, but rather, these 24 poets will perform as part of the Team Semifinals round. If the poet's team also advances to Semifinals, then their solo performance within their team's semifinals bout will count towards their total INDIVIDUAL score. If a poet finishes in the top 24 but is on a team that is not participating in Semifinals, then that poet will be assigned the opportunity to perform during one of the four semifinals bouts so that they may also earn a third score to be added to their preliminary total.*

- Scores from the Semifinals bout will be added to the preliminary scores for a cumulative total. The top 10 poets with the highest cumulative individual score will advance to the LTABFLA Individual Finals.
- An individual poet is not required to perform in both preliminary bouts. However, since the poets with the highest COMBINED scores advance to the Individual Finals, it would be nearly impossible for a poet who only performs once to advance.
- The INDIVIDUAL FINALS consist of three (3) rounds.
  - Round One: all ten (10) poets perform a 1<sup>st</sup> poem
  - Round Two: all ten (10) poets perform a 2<sup>nd</sup> poem
  - Round Three: top three (3) poets perform
- A random draw held prior to the start of the bout will determine the order for all three rounds of Indy Finals.
- The winner of the INDIVIDUAL FINALS is the poet with the highest cumulative score from all three rounds.

## NOTES:

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## TIE BREAKERS – TEAM COMPETITION

- The first tiebreaker for any team bout will be the group piece score.
- If at the conclusion of a preliminary bout, tied teams also have earned the same group piece score, these teams will share the resultant bout rank (e.g. two teams tied for first place will each receive a bout rank of 1).
- If there is a tie for first at the conclusion of a semifinals bout (or Team Finals) and both teams have also earned the same group piece score, then the tied teams will enter into a tiebreaker round. During the tiebreaker round, tied **teams will select one poet** from their roster (**regardless of how many times that poet has performed during the bout**) to perform an individual piece **that has not been performed during that bout**. Performance order will be determined by a random draw (or coin flip if only two teams are tied). Judges will hear both poems and assign scores as usual, with the highest scoring poem determining the winner. If all poets receive the same score during the tiebreaker round, judges will vote for the team they feel should advance.
- To break ties in bout rank to determine semifinalists, point differential will be utilized. Should a tie still exist, cumulative team scores will be utilized.

## TIE BREAKERS – INDY COMPETITION

- If a tie exists for 10<sup>th</sup> place among two or three Indy poets following all preliminary and semifinal rounds, then the Indy Finals will be expanded to 11 or 12 poets. Should more than three poets be tied for 10<sup>th</sup> place, then only 9 poets will advance to Indy Finals.
- If a tie for 3<sup>rd</sup> place exists among two or three poets following the second round of Individual Finals, then the final round will be expanded to accommodate the tied poets. Should more than three poets be tied for 3<sup>rd</sup> place, then only 2 poets will advance to the third and final round.
- If a tie for first place exists following the third round of Individual Finals, tied poets will enter into a tiebreaker round, during which they must perform a **fourth original poem**. Judges will assign scores as usual. Should a tie still exist after the scoring takes place, judges will vote for a winner.

## TOURNAMENT RULES



- All poets performing in the LTABFLA festival **MUST** be listed on the team's registration form submitted by **February 16, 2024**.
- Participants must perform poems of their original writing. Plagiarized poems, poems pulling directly from the work of others (including songs) without citation or referenced sources will result in the performer's **DISQUALIFICATION** and a score of 0.0 for that round. **Quoting other works and literary allusion or inspiration is typically permitted, however language directly taken from other sources should be verbally cited.** Any questions regarding this rule should be referred to the Jason Taylor Foundation in advance of the bout, or to the bout manager on the day of the bout. Plagiarism that is caught after the bout can still result in disqualification for the poet and that poem's score in the bout changed to a 0.0 retroactively.
- Poems must never have been performed in a previous year's LTABFLA competition. Performances that violate this rule will receive a 5.0-point deduction. This penalty may be enforced retroactively should the violation be discovered after the bout has concluded. Poems **MAY** be repeated within the current year's festival from one bout to the next, but never in the same bout.
- During preliminary and semifinal bouts, sacrificial poets may be chosen from one of the participating schools **ONLY** if the poet is not performing in **ANY of the rounds (individual and group)** at that current bout. If the sacrificial poet performs during any of the five rounds of that bout, their team will receive a zero for that round.
- **NO PROFANITY ALLOWED.** If a poet uses a word other than "damn" or "hell", that is cause for disqualification of that poem. That poem would receive a score of **ZERO (0)** and the poet will be asked to leave the stage.
- Content matter may not exceed a rating of **PG-13** (avoid excessive violence, sexually explicit content, and/or language that degrades any group of people). **No RACIST, XENOPHOBIC, HOMOPHOBIC, or GENDER DEGRADING language will be tolerated.** Violations will result in a 1.0-point deduction for each infraction. If violations are extreme, the poet(s) will be asked to leave the stage and the poem will receive a score of **ZERO (0)**.

## TOURNAMENT RULES CONT'D

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- The time limit for poems is three minutes. A 10-second grace period will be provided immediately after which scores will be penalized starting at the 3:10.01 point (a .5 deduction for every ten seconds over 3:10). **Poets will be asked to leave the stage at 5:00.**
- **CLOCK BEGINS AFTER INTRODUCTION.** Poets should be strongly encouraged to announce their **NAME and SCHOOL** prior to the start of each poem. The option to give a "shout out" or recognition to their school, poetry club, or group also exists. The timekeeper begins the stopwatch with **THE FIRST SOUND AFTER THE "SHOUT OUT."** Should the poet choose to say or express anything following announcing their name and/or school but prior to the "shout out", timing will begin. Timing will then begin causing the "shout out" to go against the poet's time. If there is no "shout out," timing begins with the first utterance after their initial introduction. For example, if a poet steps to the microphone, states his name and the name of his school but continues to state the name of his poem, that continuation would start the timer and will count against the poet's time. Likewise, if a poet dedicates the poem to her grandmother, the timekeeper would start the clock immediately at the beginning of the dedication.
- **NO AUDIBLE TIME CUES.** If a coach, teammate or audience member affiliated with the team verbally announces the amount of time elapsed or time remaining to a poet, including sounds that are obviously intended to signify remaining time, that performing poet receives a **five (5) point deduction** from their final score. For example, if the poem receives a score of 27.8, the penalty will reduce the score to 22.8.

## FIGURE 2 – TIMING DEDUCTION CHART

Time	Point Deduction
0:00 - 3:10.0	--
3:10.1 - 3:20.0	0.5
3:20.1 - 3:30.0	1.0
3:30.1 - 3:40.0	1.5
3:40.1 - 3:50.0	2.0
3:50.1 - 5:00.0	2.5
Poets will be asked to leave the stage after 5:00	

*< TOURNAMENT RULES continued on next page >*

## TOURNAMENT RULES CONT'D



- **NO VERBAL ASSISTANCE FROM TEAM.** If a poet is fed a word, line, or phrase during their poem, the poet(s) receiving assistance will receive a **fifteen (15) point deduction** from the poem's final score. For example, if the poem receives a score of **27.8**, the penalty reduces the score to **12.8**.
- Memorization of poems is strongly encouraged. This is one of the principles of spoken word poetry and makes for a better performance; nevertheless, **READING A POEM FROM A SHEET OF PAPER OR NOTEBOOK IS PERMITTED. HOWEVER, READING FROM AN ELECTRONIC DEVICE IS PROHIBITED AND WILL RESULT IN A 5-POINT DEDUCTION.** All judges are made aware of this, but ultimately, judging for a poetry slam is very subjective and a judge may score more harshly when scoring a non-memorized performance.
- Props, costumes, and/or musical accompaniment are prohibited. Violations of this rule will result in a **five (5) point penalty per infraction.** Poets may, however, sing, stomp, clap, snap, beatbox, etc. so long as all noises are created by the interaction between the poet's body, the stage and/or the microphone. We recommend using the **"A Pen, A Page, A Mic, A Stage"** philosophy.

For the purpose of this rule, a prop is defined as any object or article of clothing introduced demonstratively into a performance with the effect of enhancing, illustrating, underscoring, or otherwise augmenting the words of the poem. A person's body (hair, limbs, etc.) is not a prop.

For the purpose of this rule, a costume is defined as any piece of clothing or accessory that is worn on the stage which is not part of the poet's regular attire but is worn to enhance performance. A clear indication of costume would be something that a poet changes into after arriving at the bout specifically for the poem, or something they change into or out of between performances on stage. Removing outerwear (jacket, hat, sweater, etc.) will not be considered when determining costuming.

*< TOURNAMENT RULES continued on next page >*







# COMPETING POET ARRIVAL TIME & PENALTIES

## **PRELIMINARIES:**

Competing teams must attempt to arrive at least a half-hour before the bout start time. If the team is not present when their performer is called up, that team will take a **ZERO (0)** for that round. Pending time constraints, efforts will be made to provide opportunity for all late poets to perform.

## **SEMIFINALS (April 6<sup>th</sup>):**

Competing teams **must arrive 30 minutes prior to the bout start time**. If the team is not present at the beginning of the bout, they will receive a **one (1) point deduction** to their overall score. If the team is not present when their first-round performer is called up, that team will be **DISQUALIFIED**.

## **INDIVIDUAL FINALS (April 17<sup>th</sup>):**

Competing poets **must arrive 60 minutes prior to the bout start time**. If they are not present for the bout draw (which will occur 30 minutes before start time) they will receive a **0.5-point deduction** to their overall score. If the poet is not present at the beginning of the bout, they will receive an **additional 0.5-point deduction** to their overall score. If the poet is not present when they are called up to perform, that poet will be **DISQUALIFIED**.

## **TEAM FINALS (April 20<sup>th</sup>):**

Competing teams **must arrive 90 minutes prior to the bout start time for the LTABFLA Team Finalist Reception** (only poets on finalist rosters and their coaches are permitted in the reception). If they are not present for the bout draw (which will occur 45 minutes before start time) they will receive a **one (1) point deduction** to their overall score. If the team is not present at the beginning of the bout, they will receive an **additional one (1) point deduction** to their overall score. If the team is not present when their first-round performer is called up, that team will be **DISQUALIFIED**.

## **NOTES:**

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