



2027

#LTABFLA:

TOURNAMENT RULES & GUIDELINES

As of 05.04.2026

Please direct all questions and inquiries to bluapple@jasontaylorfoundation.com.

OVERVIEW

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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2026-27

TIMETABLE & SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

#LTABFLA

Saturday	September 26	Educator Orientation
Saturday	November 14	Poetry & Leadership Conference "Crossing the Street"
Saturday	December 1	LTABFLA Registration/SFYPL Applications Open
Thursday	January 14	LTABFLA New Coaches' Meeting
Thursdsday	January 22	LTABFLA Veterans Coaches' Meeting
Friday	February 19	Deadline to Register for LTABFLA; all forms and fees due
Mon. or Wed.	April 5 or 7	Preliminary Bouts (Amerant Bank Arena) TENTATIVE
Saturday	April 3	Firecracker & Dynamite Slam
Tuesday	April 10	Team & Individual Semifinal Bouts
Saturday	April 14	Individual Finals TENTATIVE
Wednesday	April 15	Coaches' Slam
Thursday	April 16	bluapple Alumni Open Mic
Saturday	April 24	Team Finals
TBD	TBD	South Florida Youth Poet Laureate Book Release Party



"The point is not the points, the point is the Poetry."



COACH RESPONSIBILITIES

- 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

- 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



[illegible]

COMPETITION FORMAT

- 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

- 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

- 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 H/S	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 H/S	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 H/S	Dan Marino	3.13	9.1	9.2	9.3	9.4	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	27.9	2.5	25.4	
C Jason Taylor H/S	Jason Taylor	3.09	8.7	9.2	9.3	9.4	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	27.9	0.0	27.9	
Individual Poet	Orande Gadsden	4.01	8.3	8.9	9.3	9.3	9.4	27.5	3.0	24.5	

ROUND TWO - INDIVIDUAL

TEAM NAME	POET NAME	TIME	LOW					HI	SUB	DEDUCT	TOTAL
B <u>Zach Thomas Acad</u>	<u>Larry Izzo</u>	3.09	9.5	9.5	9.5	9.9	10	28.9	0.0	28.9	
C <u>Jason Taylor H/S</u>	<u>Daryl Gardner</u>	2.99	9.3	9.3	9.5	9.8	9.8	28.6	0.0	28.6	
D <u>Sam Madison Charter</u>	<u>Patrick Surtain</u>	3.23	9.3	9.4	9.5	9.7	9.9	28.6	1.0	27.6	
A <u>Dan Marino H/S</u>	<u>Damon Huard</u>	4.11	9.2	9.2	9.5	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 H/S	Tim Bowens	2.95	9.6	9.8	9.9	10	10	29.7	0.0	29.7	
D Sam Madison Charter	Tim Jacobs	3.24	9.2	9.4	9.8	9.8	10	29.0	1.0	28.0	
A Dan Marino H/S	Jay Fiedler	3.09	9.4	9.4	9.6	9.7	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	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	28.7	1.0	27.7	
A Dan Marino H/S	Bernie Kassar	3.19	9.5	9.6	9.7	9.7	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	28.8	2.5	26.3	
C Jason Taylor H/S	Trace Armstrong	3.93	9.5	9.5	9.7	9.9	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	29.0	0.0	29.0	
3 Zach Thomas Acad	3:11	9.5	9.8	9.8	9.9	9.9	29.5	0.5	29.0	
2 Dan Marino H/S	3:21	8.9	9	9	9.2	9.3	27.2	1.0	26.2	
1 Jason Taylor H/S	3:11	9.3	9.4	9.5	9.6	9.7	28.5	0.5	28.0	

Harvey Greene

PRINT NAME OF SCOREKEEPER

Harvey Greene

SIGNATURE OF SCOREKEEPER

4/9/15

DATE

ADVANCING – TEAM COMPETITION

- Each team will compete in TWO preliminary bouts. Poems may not be repeated within a given bout, however a poet (or poets) may perform the same piece in each bout they compete in. Additionally, a team is not required to send up the same poets in each bout they compete in. Any registered poet on the roster is eligible to compete and a team may use any order or lineup so long as no poet appears on stage more than two times in a given bout.
- After the completion of all preliminary bouts, each team's bout ranks are added together. The top 16 teams with the lowest combined bout ranks will advance to one of four SEMIFINAL bouts (e.g. A team that finishes in first place during both of its preliminary bouts earns a combined bout rank of 2, the best ranking that can be achieved during prelims).
- The winner of each Semifinal bout will advance to LTABFLA TEAM FINALS.

NOTES:



ADVANCING – INDY COMPETITION

- 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 1st poem
 - Round Two: all ten (10) poets perform a 2nd 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:



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 10th 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 10th place, then only 9 poets will advance to Indy Finals.
- If a tie for 3rd 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 3rd 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, 2027.
- Participants must perform poems of their original writing. Plagiarized poems will result in the performer's DISQUALIFICATION and a score of 0.0 for that round. Plagiarism, as defined by Merriam-Webster, is to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own; use (another's production) without crediting the source; to commit literary theft; present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source. 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.
- Quoting other works (including songs) and literary allusion or inspiration may be permitted, however referenced sources must be cited. Neglecting to cite the source will result in penalty of up to a ten (10) points as determined by the bout manager. Similarly to a "trigger warning", source attribution may be presented before the poem ("This poem contains references/lyrics from...My name is..."). Material drawn from public domain sources is not considered plagiarism; however, students are strongly encouraged to provide attribution of any borrowed or adapted work to avoid misrepresentation of authorship.
- Poems must never have been performed in a previous year's LTABFLA competition. Performances that violate this rule will receive a five (5)-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).
- 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 will start the clock immediately at the beginning of the dedication.

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 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.
- 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 FIVE (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 penalty of up to five (5) points as determined by the bout manager.** 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. **The rule is in effect from the moment the poet enters the stage until he or she exits the stage.**

For the purpose of this rule, **a prop is defined as any object or article of clothing introduced demonstratively on stage with the effect of enhancing, illustrating, underscoring, or otherwise augmenting the performance to influence perception 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, **clothing that can be deemed as a gimmick to enhance the poet's score, or clothing that is put on or taken off during the performance. Removing outerwear (such as a jacket, hat, or sweater) for comfort or practicality is permitted and will not be considered costuming, provided it is not done in a performative or theatrical manner.**



TOURNAMENT RULES CONT'D

- Poets must remain on stage during their performance. Violation of this rule will result in a one (1) point penalty.
- Microphones and microphone stands may be moved for amplification purposes. Any utilization of mics or mic stands beyond the need for amplification may result in a prop violation. Poets are encouraged to alert the host or bout manager if they plan to move a microphone or mic stand.
- Please RESPECT THE MIC so that the judges and audience can hear each poet's entire poem.
- As a program of the Omari Hardwick blueapple Poetry Network, LTABFLA is a safe-space for all involved. Negative communication about or towards any participant or school during any of the festival's activities is not permitted and may result in removal from the venue.

*****PLEASE NOTE***** Rule violations are at the final discretion of the bout manager.

NOTES:

[illegible]

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 6th):

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 17th):

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 20th):

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:

