



Ohio High School Athletic Association

Thursday, August 27, 2020
Administrator Update

TO: OHSAA Member Schools' Superintendents, Principals and Athletic Administrators
FR: Bob Goldring, Interim Executive Director

Below are general updates and reminders to share related to our upcoming fall sports seasons. Please disseminate this information to the appropriate personnel on your staff.

Advice on Making it Through the COVID-19 Coronavirus Pandemic

"We have to have that unwavering faith that we're going to get a vaccine, we're going to continually improve on our treatment, we're going to understand it a little bit more as it goes. But there is no promise of when that day is, of when that breakthrough will happen. So we've got to make good decisions every day. That would be my advice. That was my advice to my campus. I didn't want them thinking 'Ok, this semester will be the only one where we have five modalities' because, who knows, it might be next semester as well, it might be next fall. You have to look at the brutal realities of the situation and commit yourself to making good decisions every day."

— **Jim Tressel, President, Youngstown State University, on WKNR (ESPN 850), 8-20-20 (Based on the Stockdale Paradox, named after the late James Stockdale, Navy Vice Admiral, a seven-year POW in the Vietnam War, and discussed in the 2001 Jim Collins book *Good to Great*)**

Common Questions Regarding the Health Director's Order

Who Should be Prioritized in Admitting to the Contest: Governor DeWine and Lt. Governor Husted have been consistent in saying that parents and loved ones of the participants should be given priority for access to the contest. As best as you can, please try to be mindful of this for both home and visiting parents and loved ones. As for the variance part of the Health Director's Order, that is where you can become creative. As an example, if you have a hillside around your stadium, mark those positions with six-foot distance between those positions where parents and loved ones could sit on blankets or lawn chairs. The local health department has to clear your variance plans, and those plans then have to be cleared by the Ohio Department of Health. But again, please do your best to try to accommodate those closest to the participants.

What Does the 15% Capacity Limits Entail: The 15% capacity limit includes those who sit in fixed, permanent seats in grandstands or bleachers and any other patrons that may have been approved via variance. Participants, coaches, officials, medical staff, game-day personnel and media do not need to count in that total. Remember, everyone must wear facial coverings and be socially distanced, and the intent is to help slow the contracting and/or spreading of COVID-19.

Do Coaches Need to Wear Facial Coverings: The information in the Ohio Health Director's latest Order and the Governor's guidance piece is not clear. However, the OHSAA highly recommends that coaches wear facial coverings at all times other than when they are conducting drills while using a whistle. More often than not, this would occur during practices. During contests, this would likely only occur for limited staff during warmups. Another exception would be removing the mask for a short period of time to provide instruction or call plays for participants. The Order is not intended to be punitive but instead to help slow the contracting and/or spreading of COVID-19.

Why Do We Have Limits on Dressing Students for Contests: Again, this is not to be punitive but to help slow the contracting and/or spreading of COVID-19. Yes, this makes it difficult for coaches to determine who should and should not be in full uniform with equipment. If schools are over the roster limit, one suggestion to help with the situation is to develop a rotation system for your players. As has been mentioned before, students not in full uniform with equipment are permitted on the sidelines in jerseys so long as they wear facial coverings and are socially distanced. It is highly recommended that these students simply show up to home contests and report to the sidelines and do not congregate in schools, hallways, locker rooms or athletic training rooms. It is also highly recommended that these students not travel to road contests.

Who Is Permitted to be on Team Sidelines: This decision is up to the host facility administrator. The OHSAA highly recommends that sidelines be limited to participants, coaches, medical staff, game-day personnel and media, with media members located outside the team boxes in football, which run from the 10-yard-line to the 10-yard-line. As much as possible, any other personnel should be in the fixed, permanent grandstands. Everyone must wear facial coverings and be socially distanced, and the intent is to help slow the contracting and/or spreading of COVID-19.

What is the Regulation for Volleyball Teams Playing Multiple Opponents on the Same Day: According to the Health Director's Order, volleyball teams are limited to playing one opponent on a single day. This includes all levels. For example, your JV/varsity teams are playing Team A. You have a freshman team, but Team A does not. You shall not schedule a Team B for your freshman team to play against on the same day. With that, a player could play in both the JV and varsity matches that day so long as both opponents are Team A's JV and varsity teams.

Are There Special Regulations in Place for Cross Country, Golf and Girls Tennis: While the Health Director's Order is not totally clear and the guidance piece has changed since it was first released, the OHSAA recommends that cross country, golf and girls tennis conduct business as usual. Hopefully, more clarity will be provided from the Department of Health in the near future, but the OHSAA believes the intent for multi-team races or tournaments in individual sports is that these are regarded as one "event," and therefore these one-day "events" are permitted.

COVID-19 Observer's Program; Compliance Officers; Requirements for Schools

At the strong recommendation of the Governor's Office, the OHSAA is launching an "**COVID-19 Observer's program**" where designated individuals will be attending contests throughout the state to ensure mandates are being followed. These observers will be asked to make contact with a school's athletic administrator and/or **compliance officer** (see the Health Director's Order for more on compliance officers) prior to the contest, and they will work with schools to ensure mandates are being followed. While many schools have expressed concerns about the program, please remember that the purpose of this program is educational in nature . . . the Governor and the OHSAA **want** your student-athletes to be able to continue to compete and, in order for that to continue, we all need to do our part to help slow the contracting and/or spreading of COVID-19.

The observers will be filing reports with the OHSAA. We will review each report and use them as a tool to help schools maintain the mandates to provide a safe atmosphere and continue to provide opportunities. Depending upon the severity of the situation, violations could result in the OHSAA issuing consequences as prescribed in Bylaw 11, Penalties. Here is a draft of the observer's form (**Note:** This document will likely undergo revisions as the program continues, but we wanted you to see how the form will look in general):

https://ohsaa-my.sharepoint.com/:b:/g/personal/tbrooks_ohsaa_org/ERTtLrbMeMtHvE1JTnCTEWcBH6J3oxoEYu0zG9Zi_5YpRw?e=PpDkrb

In addition, the OHSAA is finalizing an online form for school administrators and/or the public to complete when concerns over following the mandates are discovered. This form is largely designed for school administrators, especially if they are traveling to road contests. Here is a draft of this online form (**Note:** This form may undergo changes as the program continues, but we wanted you to see how the form will look in general):

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/VNN5MLN>

COVID-19 Public Address Announcement

As a service to the member schools, the OHSAA has developed the following public address announcement that you are welcome to utilize during contests as it relates to staying safe and following all protocols:

"Ladies and Gentlemen – this year, our season depends on the cooperation and support from everyone to follow the safety guidelines set by the Ohio Department of Health, the Governor's Office and the Ohio High School Athletic Association. As we have seen, the opportunity to play sports can be taken away by the spread of COVID-19. We ask that everyone in attendance wear a facial covering, use proper hygiene and keep yourself and your family six feet apart from other families. Our ability to follow these guidelines will go a long way in determining how much of a season our student-athletes will have. Thank you for your cooperation."

Transfer Bylaw Reminders

This is a reminder that there have been **no COVID-19-related changes** to OHSAA Transfer Bylaws 4-7 outside of the waiver of the transfer consequence for the spring sports season from 2020. Due to the cancellation of all spring sports, no 2020 spring sport athlete – even if he or she did participate in a scrimmage last spring – will be subject to the transfer consequences for spring 2021. Because there are no other COVID-19-related changes to the Transfer Bylaw, any transfer student whose transfer does not qualify under a duly adopted exception to the Transfer Bylaw shall become ineligible beginning with the second half of the regular season, using the varsity contest schedule, plus the OHSAA tournament based solely on the maximum allowable regular season varsity contests that the Board has approved in each of our 26 sports. See Bylaw 4-7-3 for the appropriate transfer consequence when a student transfers during the regular season after having participated in a regular season contest that school season. This includes the transfer consequence for students who may have transferred last fall 2019 season as well as this fall 2020 after having participated in a regular

season contest. A transfer during a school season after having participated in a regular season contest also affects what is indicated below.

The revised football schedule and tournament format has generated some questions relative to the Transfer Bylaw (4-7-2) and for what contests a transfer student who does not meet an exception is or is not eligible. Perhaps the best way to approach these questions is as follows: 1.) no transfer student who does not meet a transfer exception shall be eligible for any OHSAA-sponsored tournament football games REGARDLESS of how many “regular season games” a school/team may have played prior to the start of the tournament; 2.) a transfer student who does not meet a transfer exception will be eligible for the first five (5) regular season contests (i.e. any non-tournament game) regardless of when those regular season contests fall on the calendar relative to the OHSAA football tournament. **To clarify after sending this reminder previously . . .** this does not mean schools can “pick and choose” what five regular season contests in which the student can participate. Once the school plays its **first** five regular season contests in football, the student is no longer eligible for any remaining regular season contests. And, to repeat, no transfer student who does not meet a transfer exception will be eligible for any OHSAA-sponsored tournament football contests.

With respect to any other sport, the interpretation and application of the transfer bylaw remains the same in that no transfer student who does not meet a transfer exception is eligible for the OHSAA tournament. As in past years, transfer students whose transfer does not qualify under an enumerated exception shall be ineligible for the tournament regardless of the actual number of regular season contests in which the school actually competes.

OHSAA Spring Opportunities Information

As was shared previously, the OHSAA is prepared to provide an opportunity for our schools to play fall contact sports in the spring. What does that mean? First, consider that the OHSAA has stayed the course on opening the fall 2020 sport season because a.) we have been advised that in most districts, this can be done with the proper management of the risks associated with COVID-19; b.) the positive impact sports participation has on children (mental, physical and emotional) and the need/desire to play, and c.) the desires expressed by the member schools.

Notwithstanding this, we recognize that in some areas of the state, managing the risks associated with the virus are much more difficult than in other areas of the state and, therefore, some programs have been shut down or are on a delayed start. The OHSAA’s commitment to the Governor – and now to its member schools – is to eliminate any impediments in the bylaws and regulations of the OHSAA that would preclude and/or prohibit participation in these “fall sports” in the spring for those schools who did not participate in those sports in the fall due to the virus. Therefore, schools will have an opportunity to play their contact sports in the spring. As of today, that is merely saying there will be a suspension of bylaws and regulations so that students can compete interscholastically in the contact sports and, as of now, the OHSAA has no intentions of conducting any tournaments for these sports in the spring. Time will dictate what the spring structure will look like and, if we have learned anything during the pandemic, it is that the landscape changes daily. We will be discussing this situation further and hope to share answers with you soon.

Thank you for your attention to this information!