



Ohio High School Athletic Association

Wednesday, November 18, 2020

Administrator Update

TO: Member Schools' Superintendents, Principals and Athletic Administrators

FR: Doug Ute, OHSAA Executive Director

Winter Sports Moving Forward

Though we are seeing a spike in COVID-19 cases in Ohio, I would like to utilize this update to reaffirm that the OHSAA winter sports seasons will go forward as planned. This decision comes after discussion with the Governor's Office, the OHSAA Board of Directors and the OHSAA staff along with conversations with numerous administrators and the results of the membership survey that we just conducted. The result of that survey (with 1,464 total votes) is as follows:

- a. Begin all winter sports contests as they are currently planned and scheduled for winter 2020-21.
Superintendents-114 yes; Principals-264 yes; Athletic Administrators-448 yes; **Total-826 yes (56%)**
- b. Suspend all winter sports contests immediately and begin when/if conditions change.
Superintendents-37 yes; Principals-59 yes; Athletic Administrators-59 yes; **Total-155 yes (11%)**
- c. Suspend all winter sports contests immediately and begin with a defined schedule beginning in January.
Superintendents-84 yes; Principals-142 yes; Athletic Administrators-257 yes; **Total-483 yes (33%)**

The decision for your school in moving forward is strictly a local decision . . . your school or school district may certainly choose not to participate in a contest or to pause your season(s) for a period and should do what is in your best interest.

As we have said previously, our member schools provide our student-athletes with the safest possible environment to continue participating. If we were to delay, our students will find opportunities to compete in sports through non-school programs that may not be focused on safety and are not education-based. We will continue to study the data on COVID-19 and continue in discussions with the Governor's Office to determine if we need to make changes to our seasons. If we do, we believe we have flexibility that would allow us to look at implementing other models for our seasons.

Governor's New Curfew Order

In discussion with Lt. Governor Husted Tuesday, the new Ohio curfew Order does not mean schools must be home from their competitions strictly at 10:00 p.m., but venues/gyms need to be vacated by 10:00 followed by transportation back home. While consideration by schools and conferences/leagues should be given to move starting times for contests earlier, the new Order DOES mean it is imperative that administrators work with student-athletes and coaches to emphasize that, **once the contest ends or schools return from road trips, everyone should go home and not congregate at someone's house or a local restaurant.** Those types of gatherings have proven to help spread the virus and may play a major role in pausing a school's season.

COVID-19 General Guidance (Including Mandates; Spectator Capacity, and Recommended Best Practices)

All mandates in the Ohio Department of Health Director's Sports Order must continue to be followed for winter sports. Here is a link to the Health Director's Sports Order: <https://bit.ly/2RWa1jh>. In addition, here is a link to the Health Department's Responsible RestartOhio guidance document for sports:

<https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/static/responsible/Youth-Collegiate-Amateur-Club-Pro-Sports.pdf>, and here is a link to the ODH's Responsible RestartOhio guidance document for sports venues: <https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/static/responsible/Sports-Venues.pdf>.

It is especially important that requirements for facial coverings, social distancing and frequent hand washing be followed and that facility hosts disinfect and clean competition and high contact areas frequently. Also note that the Order has a limit on spectator capacity, which is the lesser of 15 percent of fixed, permanent seats or 300.

Winter Sports Requirements, Recommendations and Modifications

The OHSAA staff has developed sport-specific requirements, recommendations and modifications for schools when conducting interscholastic competition in winter sports. Links to the sport-specific requirements, recommendations and modifications for winter sports are available here:

Basketball: <http://bit.ly/BKRecs>

Gymnastics: <http://bit.ly/GYMRecs>

Swimming & Diving: <http://bit.ly/SDRecs>

Bowling: <http://bit.ly/BORecs>

Ice Hockey: <http://bit.ly/IHRecs>

Wrestling: <http://bit.ly/WRRecs>

Additional Winter Sports Guidance – Athletes/Participants Counting in Capacity; Cheerleaders & Pep Bands

The OHSAA has received additional guidance from the Ohio Department of Health on various winter (indoor) sports concerns. First, contest participants (athletes waiting to play and athletes completing play, plus cheerleaders, pep band members, etc.) do not count toward a sports venue's allowable number of spectators under Ohio's Sports Order or any variance that has been approved for your facility. However, school administrators are cautioned to use good judgement in this area. If, for example, auxiliary areas are available for athletes waiting to play or having completed play, including cheerleaders, pep band members, etc., consider placing these students in that area. No matter where these students are placed, six-foot social distancing mandates must be followed, and facial coverings are required. Consideration should also be given to sending freshman, junior varsity and/or varsity teams on separate transportation to away contests and having those groups depart after their specific contests are completed.

Secondly, cheerleaders and pep band members are considered to be participants in the sports event and consequently subject to the Sports Order and guidance (links to both are provided above). For additional "recommended best practices" for pep bands, go to:

<https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/static/responsible/schools/K-12-Collegiate-Band-Choir-Dance.pdf>.

Here are some **additional recommendations** from the OHSAA for schools to attempt to mitigate exposure:

- Reduce or greatly eliminate unnecessary travel.
- In individual sports, reduce the number of opponents that participate in a contest (example: maximum of three other schools in wrestling, swimming & diving, gymnastics and bowling contests).
- Reduce or eliminate contact frequency with student-athletes from schools outside of each school's league/conference or normal competition sphere.
- Practice in separate groups in the event one group has COVID-19 exposure (but perhaps the other group may not and can continue participation).
- Develop "halftimes" for sports that do not traditionally have these breaks. This would allow for disinfecting and cleaning to occur in competition and high contact areas.
- Place cheerleaders as far away from players and contest officials on the court as possible and potentially in bleacher areas if room is available.
- Cheerleaders and pep band members must wear facial coverings when not performing and must maintain six-foot social distancing.

Winter Sports Schedules

Here is the schedule for the beginning of contests for the OHSAA's winter sports:

Friday, Nov. 13 – bowling

Friday, Nov. 20 – girls basketball, ice hockey

Wednesday, Nov. 25 – boys basketball

Monday, Nov. 30 – swimming & diving

Thursday, Dec. 3 – wrestling

Monday, Dec. 7 – gymnastics

OHSAA Provides School Form for Students Returning to Play from COVID-19

As a reminder, the Ohio Health Director's Sports Order says that a student-athlete who tests positive for COVID-19, whether symptomatic or asymptomatic, shall not return to sports activities until a documented medical exam is performed clearing the individual prior to the individual returning to participate in practice or games. The documented medical exam must specifically include an assessment of the cardiac/heart of high intensity exercise due to the potential of myocarditis occurring in COVID-19 patients. To assist the membership in this process, the OHSAA has developed a form that schools are welcome to utilize for students who have had the medical exam to verify that the student can or cannot return to practices or games. The OHSAA form is not a requirement and is simply being provided as a tool for the membership. The form is also for use by the student and schools only and is not to be returned to the OHSAA.

Administrators can access the form here:

<https://ohsaaweb.blob.core.windows.net/files/Sports/2020/RTPCoronavirus.pdf>

Thank you for your attention to this information and for the service you are providing our student-athletes!