



Ohio High School Athletic Association

Friday, December 4, 2020

Administrator Update

TO: Member Schools' Superintendents, Principals and Athletic Administrators

FR: OHSAA Executive Director's Office

Winter Sports General Update

We again thank you for all your efforts in working with our student-athletes so that they have the opportunity to participate during this most challenging time. We are also appreciative of the Governor's Office permitting our seasons to continue, while understanding that our focus is on the health, safety and well-being of our student-athletes and all participants in the interscholastic environment. As we have said previously, the decision for schools to move forward is strictly a local decision . . . schools or school districts may certainly choose not to participate in a contest or to pause their season(s) for a period and should do what is in their best interest. But we also believe our member schools provide our student-athletes with the safest possible environment to continue participating, and we all recognize the educational, physical and mental health benefits of participation.

We also want to reemphasize that our schools should **do all that they can to keep crowds to a minimum**, even going below the Ohio Health Director's Sports Order that limits spectators to the lesser of 15 percent permanent, fixed seats or 300. **Our recommendation is that you limit your crowds to parents and immediate family members.** By not being cautious and reducing the number of spectators, we are putting our student-athletes at risk of not only contracting and/or spreading COVID-19 but also risking the possibility of losing the winter sports seasons for our students, their families, their teammates, their schools and their communities. So again, we strongly suggest you follow our recommendation on spectator limits.

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.

Winter Sports Ideas to Consider

Here are some ideas for administrators to consider when hosting contests. These are merely ideas and an attempt to help mitigate exposure (**and we want to emphasize that these are strictly local school decisions and the OHSAA will not penalize schools that do not follow these suggestions**):

- Reduce or eliminate unnecessary travel.
- Reduce or eliminate contact frequency with student-athletes from schools outside of each school's league/conference or normal competition sphere.
- If feasible at your school, send freshman, junior varsity and/or varsity teams on separate transportation to away contests and have those groups depart after their specific contests are completed.
- In individual sports, reduce the number of opponents that participate in a contest (**idea:** maximum of three other schools in wrestling, swimming & diving, gymnastics and bowling contests).
- Practice in separate groups in the event one group has COVID-19 exposure (but perhaps the other group may not and can continue participation).
- Find time for disinfecting and cleaning to occur in competition and high contact areas.
- If possible, position cheerleaders a considerable distance away from players and contest officials on the court and potentially position them in bleacher areas if room is available.
- The OHSAA has no prohibition on cheerleaders and pep bands. Schools should make their own decisions on these students' participation and may want to even consider not sending cheerleaders to away contests.
- If 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 when not participating/performing.
- Limit media to those who normally cover your school and consider providing live video streaming for those who cannot attend your contest(s).
- For those schools that decide to admit parents, list the names of the parents on a roster sheet that is located at your ticket window/admission table. This will help clarify who should/should not be admitted and will hopefully eliminate non-parents from attending.

Observer's Program Continues with Winter Sports

As you are aware, the OHSAA launched a COVID-19 Observer's Program in the fall at the strong recommendation of the Governor's Office. The Observer's Program will be continuing this winter. Observers are designated individuals who are attending contests throughout the state to ensure mandates in the Ohio Health Director's Sports Order are being followed. Observers are asked to make contact with a school's athletic administrator and/or the required Compliance Officer prior to the contest, and, throughout the contest, they may provide feedback to the school contact regarding any violations they observe. However, in general, the observers are not in attendance to police the requirements set forth by the Governor's Office . . . they are simply there to report on what they find. The observers file reports with the OHSAA. We will review each report and share them as a tool to help schools maintain the mandates to provide a safe atmosphere and continue to provide opportunities. Here is a link to the checklist that the Observers will be using for winter sports:

<https://ohsaaweb.blob.core.windows.net/files/Sports/2020/ObserverChecklist-WinterSports.pdf>

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>.

Schools are reminded:

- Participants not in the contest **ARE REQUIRED** to wear facial coverings on the sidelines.
- Participants not in the contest and on the sidelines **ARE REQUIRED** to be socially distanced (as close to six feet apart as possible).
- Outside of game play, players are **NOT PERMITTED** to have physical contact with their teammates (such as high-fives and handshakes). Coaches and other team personnel are also not permitted to have physical contact with players.
- Any spectators in attendance **ARE REQUIRED** to wear facial coverings and to be socially distanced.
- Disinfect and clean competition and high contact areas frequently.

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>

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

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

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

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

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

Governor's Curfew Order

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 participants and coaches 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.

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. However, it is required that a student who has tested positive be evaluated by a physician and cleared in writing before being permitted to return to participation. If you discover that a student's physician is reticent to issue this clearance, please advise parents to seek a second opinion from another physician. This physician is not required to be a cardiologist but could be any qualified physician who is willing to conduct this evaluation. 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>

Winter Sports State Online Rules Meetings Now Live

This is a reminder that 2020-21 OHSAA state rules meetings for each winter sport (basketball, bowling, gymnastics, ice hockey, swimming & diving and wrestling) are now live and that completion of these online meetings is required for tournament participation. Schools are encouraged to have either the head coach, an assistant coach or the athletic administrator complete the

meeting prior to the final meeting date for each sport. The final meeting date coincides with the tournament entry/withdraw without penalty date (**Jan. 25, 2021:** girls basketball, bowling, swimming & diving, wrestling; **Feb. 1, 2021:** boys basketball, gymnastics, ice hockey). All state rules meetings are available through *myOHSAA* and can be accessed through the Rules Meeting icon. Athletic administrators have been emailed additional information regarding tracking state rules meeting attendance from the OHSAA Membership Services team.

Reminder that the \$50 late fee for the winter state rules meetings will begin the day after the above referenced date listed for each sport. Please have your coaches complete the required state rules meeting prior to the dates listed above to avoid the \$50 late fee. Contact membershipservices@ohsaa.org if you have any questions or need assistance.

Modifications to Bylaws Per Constitution Article 6-1-9

With the recent decision to move forward with the winter sports season as originally scheduled and, recognizing that there will likely be some cancellations due to COVID-19 despite the OHSAA's decision, the Executive Director's Office has elected to utilize Constitution Article 6-1-9 and waive strict compliance with two additional OHSAA Bylaws:

Bylaw 3-3-1 – School Representative Must Accompany Team

This bylaw traditionally requires a principal, or representative(s) authorized by the principal, in addition to the coach (es), to be present throughout all boys and girls varsity basketball games, home and away, and this same requirement is highly recommended for ice hockey. However, due to the decreased crowd sizes and the desire to limit unnecessary travel, the Executive Director's Office has elected to waive the away game administrator attendance requirement if this arrangement is mutually agreed upon by both schools. If a visiting school representative plans to miss an away varsity basketball contest, it is the responsibility of the visiting school representative to contact the opposing athletic administrator to determine if he/she believes a visiting administrator presence is necessary. If the arrangement is not mutually agreed upon, then the visiting school representative should try to make arrangements to fulfill this away game attendance obligation. Leagues/conferences are permitted to make this blanket decision in order to reduce game-by-game communication. This modification is being utilized through the end of the 2020-21 winter sports season.

Bylaw 4-7-2 – Sub Varsity Transfers

This bylaw traditionally requires all transfer students who do not meet any transfer exception to become ineligible after the first 50% of the maximum allowable varsity regular season contests have been competed, regardless of the participation level of the student. However, due to anticipated cancellations and the possibility for sub varsity games not being rescheduled, the Executive Director's Office has elected to waive strict compliance with this bylaw for athletes at the sub varsity level using the following conditions:

- If an athlete participates in **ANY varsity contest**, then he/she is subject to the traditional transfer consequence of becoming ineligible once the varsity team completes the first 50% of the maximum allowable number of regular season contests.
- If an athlete only plays sub varsity, then he/she will become ineligible after his/her respective team completes the first 50% of the maximum allowable regular season contests at that level. For example, if an athlete only plays JV basketball, then he/she can play the first 11 JV basketball contests, regardless of where the varsity team is in its season. Then, the student will become ineligible beginning with JV contest #12.
- If an athlete only dresses varsity but does not participate in a varsity contest, then he/she can still benefit from this modification at the sub varsity level. Once an athlete plays in a varsity contest, however, the varsity schedule takes precedence.
- This modification is being utilized through the end of the 2020-21 school year, including springsports.

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