



Ohio High School Athletic Association

Tuesday, November 24, 2020

Administrator Update

TO: Member Schools' Superintendents, Principals and Athletic Administrators

FR: Doug Ute, OHSAA Executive Director

Winter Sports General Update

In following up on Governor DeWine's remarks during his news conference earlier today (Tuesday, Nov. 24), the OHSAA, in conjunction with the Governor's Office, is recommending that those schools who are moving forward with sports competition **eliminate fans or dramatically restrict attendance to parents of the participants only** between now and the end of 2020. While the Ohio Health Director's Sports Order has a limit on spectator capacities for indoor events, fans and crowds are **NOT** advisable at this time. As COVID-19 numbers are spiking in Ohio, this is an opportunity for our schools to help limit the spread of the virus. A few related recommendations:

- 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.
- Limit media to those who normally cover your school and consider utilizing a streaming service in order for fans to view your contest(s).
- There is no prohibition on cheerleaders and pep bands, but schools should make their own decisions on these students' participation and should strongly consider not sending cheerleaders to away contests.

As administrators were notified last week, the OHSAA winter sports seasons are moving forward as planned. That decision was made after the Executive Director's Office had discussions with the Governor's Office, the OHSAA Board of Directors and numerous administrators combined with the results of the membership survey in which 56 percent of the 1,464 respondents recommended that the OHSAA begin all winter sports contests as they are currently planned and scheduled.

As we have already seen, 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.

As we have said previously, 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. 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.

Observer's Program Continues into Winter

The OHSAA launched a COVID-19 Observer's Program in the fall at the strong recommendation of the Governor's Office, and the 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 use them as a tool to help schools maintain the mandates to provide a safe atmosphere and continue to provide opportunities. With the spike in COVID-19 cases, it is **IMPERATIVE** that administrators and coaches are diligent in ensuring that the Ohio Health Director's Sports Order is being followed. 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.

Governor's New 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.

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>.

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>

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

School administrators are cautioned to use good judgement when it comes to athletes waiting to play and athletes completing play, plus cheerleaders, pep band members, etc. 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.
- Consider having cheerleaders only perform at home contests.
- 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>

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 (those dates are listed on page 62 of the 2020-21 *OHSAA Handbook*). 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.

Please contact membershipservices@ohsaa.org if you have any questions or need assistance.

A Note from the OHSAA Finance Department

The OHSAA Finance Department reminds school administrators that any general financial questions – including questions on financial reports, invoices, receipts, requests, etc. – should be sent directly to OHSAA Assistant Director of Finance and Accounting Haley Dillon at hdillon@ohsaa.org. The accounting@ohsaa.org email is **ONLY** to be used for tournament site financial reports that are sent to the OHSAA Office from host sites. Thank you for your cooperation!

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