



Ohio High School Athletic Association

Friday, August 7, 2020
Administrator Update

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

In continuing our constructive, ongoing conversations with the Governor's Office, we were advised this week that ending our season earlier in football was in the best interest of the participants due to the uncertainty of what colder weather could do to COVID-19 cases. Therefore, our Board of Directors today approved a modification to the OHSAA football season that we believe will be a win-win for all parties. It should be noted (and as previously communicated) that school vs. school competition in football (and the other contact sports of soccer and field hockey) will not move forward unless the Ohio Director of Health's Order is amended.

While affirming that our fall sports seasons will start as planned, the modification will shorten the length of the 2020 football regular season to a six-game schedule prior to the playoffs beginning. With this, all football-playing schools will now be eligible to enter the 2020 playoffs. Schools also will be afforded the opportunity to play 10 total regular season contests – whether they continue regular season games after they are eliminated from the playoffs or should they decide not to enter the playoffs – as long as they complete their season by November 14. This raises the possibility of schools generating some revenue through gate receipts, and allowing schools to play after being eliminated from the playoffs is similar to regulations that already exist for many other OHSAA sports. Additionally, this means schools that may be delayed in starting their seasons could still have a football season.

The Board approved the measure by a unanimous 9-0 vote earlier today following a recommendation from the OHSAA staff.

As part of this plan, the Harbin Computer Ratings to determine playoff qualifiers will not be used for the 2020 football season and instead a seed system, similar to what occurs with other OHSAA team sports, will be utilized to place teams on the bracket of their respective divisions. New regions will be determined, and pairings will be announced on October 1.

"To both ensure we can offer students the opportunity to participate in education-based athletes but do so with their best interests in mind, we believe this modified plan offers a positive solution by addressing many of the concerns of our member schools," said Jeff Cassella, president of the OHSAA Board of Directors and athletic administrator at Mentor High School. "Those that are able to start their seasons on time will be able to do so. Those that are starting later can still have a season. Add in the option of all schools entering the playoffs and the possibility of schools still being able to play 10 regular season contests, and this plan is helpful to virtually all of our schools."

The highest number of responses to one of the questions posed of superintendents, principals and athletic administrators in a recent OHSAA membership survey indicated that nearly 60 percent (890 of 1,498 respondents) favored either reducing the regular season and maintaining full OHSAA tournaments or maintaining the full regular season and maintaining full OHSAA tournaments.

The OHSAA contact sports are on target to begin their seasons later this month, pending the Ohio Director of Health's Order being amended. Soccer and field hockey contests are scheduled to begin August 21 and the first week of the football season beginning the week of August 24. The low/non-contact sports of golf and girls tennis have already started playing contests, and the other low/non-contact sports of volleyball and cross country can begin playing contests on August 21 and 24, respectively.

With the modified schedule, here are the OHSAA plans for the 2020 football season:

2020 OHSAA Football

- A six-game regular season will begin the week of August 24
- All teams eligible to enter the OHSAA playoffs
- Number of playoff rounds dependent upon the number of schools entering the playoffs in each division
- Schools eliminated from the OHSAA playoffs or that choose not to enter the OHSAA playoffs have the option to schedule additional regular season contests through Saturday, November 14 (maximum of 10 regular season contests permitted)
- Regular season Week 1: Week of August 24
- Regular season Week 2: Week of August 31
- Regular season Week 3: Week of September 7
- Regular season Week 4: Week of September 14
- Regular season Week 5: Week of September 21
- Regular season Week 6: Week of September 28
- Playoffs begin Friday, October 9
- State finals end no later than Saturday, Nov. 21

Other Playoff Details

- Playoff seeding will be via a vote of the coaches the week of September 28 (Harbin Ratings suspended for 2020 season)
- All playoff contests through the regional semifinals (and possibly the regional finals) will be hosted by the higher seeded team
- Schools must commit to participate in the playoffs by 11:59 p.m. on Thursday, September 17
- Playoff regions will be drawn on Friday, September 18
- Schools may withdraw from the playoffs without penalty until Thursday, September 24

For additional questions and answers regarding the modified OHSAA football season, please go here:

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

Additional Note on OHSAA Contests

In concert with the Governor's Office and Department of Health, the OHSAA is prepared to set COVID-19-related requirements for schools to follow for competitions and could issue consequences for the violation of these requirements as prescribed in OHSAA Bylaw 11, Penalties. It is hopeful that those requirements will be finalized next week. The requirements will be related to many of the same protocols and mandates already in place for many sectors as they relate to symptom assessments; temperature checks; facial coverings; social distancing; cleaning and sanitizing, and confirmed COVID-19 cases/exposure to the virus.

The Governor understands that interscholastic sports are different than other forms of competition because we are education-based and are able to implement best practices for dealing with COVID-19 restrictions. So, if we want our students to have the privilege of competing in interscholastic athletics, it's going to be up to all of us to make sure all mandates and protocols are being followed. We all need to be diligent and be disciplined.