

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:



Board of Directors approve returning volleyball, football to fall season

Monday, Sept. 21, 2020

BROOKLYN CENTER, Minn. --- The Minnesota State High School League's Board of Directors today approved a reconsideration placement of fall activities, a decision that brings football and volleyball back to the fall season.

The plan, which fits within COVID-19 guidance of the Minnesota Department of Health, will have an approved football season beginning on Sept. 28 with the first of six regular season games scheduled for the week of Oct. 5. Since Sept. 14, member schools have had the option of participating in fall training sessions. In the framework that was adopted by the Board of Directors, a planned two-week football postseason will begin the week of Nov. 16.

Volleyball will begin an 11-week season on Sept. 28 and member schools may play their first matches on Oct. 8. In the framework that was approved by the board, two weeks of postseason play would begin the week of Nov. 30. Like football, member schools have had the option of participating in voluntary training sessions since Sept. 14.

"The Minnesota State High School League continues to work to provide educational opportunities for our student athletes in the safest manner possible for all involved," said Board of Directors President Blaine Novak of New York Mills. "Coming into the meeting, we knew that every decision we make affects every other decision for the rest of the calendar year. Today's decision, based on what we currently know and with the unknowns of what spring will bring, is based on the belief that playing now provides us the best opportunity to play a football and volleyball season."

In a vote on Aug. 4, the board approved postponing football and volleyball until a spring season. But on Wednesday, Sept. 16, a day after a lengthy board workshop, Novak called for a special meeting of the Board of Directors to give reconsideration of returning the two activities to their traditional fall seasons. During the workshop, MDH shared updated information on COVID-19 analytics, spread and prevention. Board members also engaged in discussion with the Return to Participation Task Force, a group formed in late July to explore participation models and options for member schools and their participants during the COVID era.

"The decisions by our Board of Directors both provide opportunities for many student athletes and also require everyone's responsible actions in keeping students and communities safe," League Executive Director Erich Martens said. "It will be critical that our schools do their very best to enact protocols that maximize the safety of our students, coaches and officials."

"The amount of information that is considered, as well as the amount of discussion that takes place, is indicative of the challenges that each decision provides. We know that our activities support the mental health and physical well-being of our students and we hope that the initiation of these fall interscholastic seasons will provide outstanding and safe opportunities for our students."

Six League activities are currently taking place: Girls Tennis, Boys and Girls Cross Country, Boys and Girls Soccer and Girls Swimming and Diving. Those activities began on Aug. 17 with additional safety protocols and practices as well as modified seasons, which decreased the length of the season by 20 percent and the number of contests by 30 percent.

In approving the moves in August, and again today, the Board of Directors used information and frameworks provided by the Return to Participation Task Force. The primary guiding principle during the process was to provide opportunities in the safest way possible in all League activities and athletics for the 2020-2021 school year. Throughout their work, the board stressed that all aspects of athletics, including practices, competitions, transportation, and facility usage must align with the requirements of the Minnesota Department of Education Return to Learning models, must follow the requirements from the Minnesota Department of Health's Guidance on Youth Sports, and must include the required actions identified in the Governor's Executive Orders.

At today's meeting, the Board of Directors also discussed the League's activities calendar for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year, including information from League Staff on postseason options for the fall season. Approving the complete calendar for the remainder of the school year will be an Action Item at the Board of Directors' next regularly scheduled meeting on Oct. 1.

The Minnesota State High School League provides educational opportunities for students through interscholastic athletics and fine arts programs, and provides leadership and support for member schools.

Tim Leighton	Minnesota State High School League
Communications Coordinator/ Music Coordinator	2100 Freeway Boulevard Brooklyn Center, MN 55430-1735 (P)763.560.2262 (F)763.569.0499
tleighton@mshsl.org	www.mshsl.org
(P)763.569.0485	