

MSHSL Board of Directors Meeting August 4, 2020

2020 MSHSL Fall Activities

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CATEGORY: [LEAGUE NEWS](#)

The Minnesota State High School League's Board of Directors, at its meeting on Aug. 4, approved moving forward as scheduled with four Fall activities. Girls Tennis, Boys and Girls Cross Country, Boys and Girls Soccer and Girls Swimming and Diving beginning on Aug. 17 with limitations. The Board of Directors also approved moving Football and Volleyball to a modified spring season.

In approving the changes, the Board of Directors used information and frameworks provided by the Return to Participation Task Force in an earlier meeting. These frameworks were grounded in the following guiding principles:

- Demonstrate health and safety to the greatest extent possible
- Align with state organizations and agencies around return to learn models
- Provide an opportunity for education-based participation in each sport and activity
- Demonstrate equity and fairness
- Acknowledge financial implications
- Apply guidelines consistently

"Our Board of Directors recognizes the importance of the League's activities in supporting the mental and physical well-being of our students and worked very hard to provide some level of participation in all activities. In addition, they recognize their responsibility in focusing on the health and safety of all who participate in or support these opportunities."

Erich Martens, MSHSL Executive Director.

The decisions to provide seasons for Girls Tennis, Boys and Girls Cross Country, Boys and Girls Soccer and Girls Swimming and Diving beginning on Aug. 17 and move competition in Football and Girls Volleyball to a spring season were made based on:

- Governor Walz's Executive Order 20-82 declaring that the return to learning would be a localized decision aligning with the current statistical situation and mitigation measures available in each district,
- The Minnesota Department of Education's specific plan for returning to learning for the 2020-2021 school year,
- The Minnesota Department of Health's Guidance for Youth Sports along with the National Federation of High Schools Return to Sports document,
- The MSHSL Return to Participation Task Force multiple frameworks for returning to participation,
- Review of and feedback from lead physicians from the MSHSL Sports Medicine Advisory Committee

"We had very difficult, weighty decisions today in trying to balance the benefits of students across our state participating in activities with the risks involved due to the COVID-19 virus, I am very appreciative of the work of our Return to Participation Task Force and deep, thoughtful and intentional discussion of the board weighing the benefits of participation versus the inherent risk, and how that risk can be managed."

Board President Blaine Novak of New York Mills

In recognizing the risks associated with both fine arts and athletic opportunities as well as the benefits that participation in these same activities provides, the board approved the following for fall sports at the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year, with these requirements as a minimum:

- All aspects of athletics including meetings, practices, competitions, transportation and facility usage must align with the requirements of the Minnesota Department of Education plan for return to learning, 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.
- Schools that choose to offer fall athletics (including Girls Tennis, Boys and Girls Cross Country, Boys and Girls Soccer and Girls Swimming and

Diving) may begin practice on Monday, August 17th. For schools that are required by localized metrics to be in a distance learning mode, practices are limited to virtual contact only.

- Football and Girls Volleyball will be delayed until a spring season. This will require further work in scheduling seasons through the winter and spring to provide opportunities for participation in multiple activities with minimal overlap of seasons.
- The first week of practice should focus on implementing effective protocols and routines for pre-participation screenings, effective social distancing, compliance with all health recommendations, establishment of pod limits of 25 or less, and additional actions that mitigate the spread of disease and enhance safety of students and coaches.
- Athletic programs must follow the identified protocols for students or coaches who have tested positive, are experiencing symptoms consistent with a COVID-19 diagnosis, or have had exposure to an individual who has been diagnosed with COVID-19.
- The first day of competition is the later date of Monday, August 24th or the first possible date of competition as identified in the 500 series of MSHSL Bylaws per each activity.
- Interscholastic scrimmages will not be allowed.
- The number of teams involved in a competition will be limited.
- Season length will be reduced to 80% or less of the limit identified in Bylaw 501.
- The number of competitions will be reduced to 70% or less of the limit identified in Bylaw 501.
- Competitions must be held with local opponents, defined as teams within a conference, district or section, or are identified as local by school administration.
- Competitions held with opponents from other states are required to meet the following:
 - Full compliance with all requirements of the MSHSL and MDH
 - Opponents from other states may not exceed a distance greater than 75 miles from the Minnesota member school.

In addition to the information provided here, the MSHSL will provide sport specific guidance for each fall sport that will further identify any modifications and recommendations for both practice and competition in each sport.

Return to Participation for Adapted Soccer will be addressed through collaborative planning with the Minnesota Adapted Athletics Association and the MSHSL. Additionally, Return to Participation for all MSHSL Category II activities will be determined through activity specific planning and will be in alignment with the Return to Learning Plan provided by MDE.

In another Action Item, the Board of Directors approved a Finance Task Force recommendation that member schools will commit additional membership fees in creating an updated, sustainable business model for the League. Also included in the recommendation is the development of a strategic marketing plan that will generate financial support for League activities.

"From large schools to small schools, metro and outstate, public and private, as well as home school, members came together as part of the Finance Task Force to see a sustainable solution to the existing budget issues facing our league. The MSHSL is made up of 500-plus member schools. There is no separation or differentiation between the MSHSL and our member schools. We are one."

"Throughout all of our meetings the past two years as a board member, and now as I enter my third year, I have not heard one request directed to me personally to cut or reduce services, activities or opportunities for our students. The efforts of the Finance Committee and the action of the board of directors today will take great steps toward ensuring the continuity of services and activities currently provided by the MSHSL, both today and into the future for every student and member school belonging to the MSHSL."

Board Vice President Tom Jerome of Roseau