

IHSA Officially Cancels Spring Sports Season, State Tournament Series Following Closure Of Schools For Remainder Of Academic Year

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BLOOMINGTON - Following the announcement on Friday that all Illinois public and private schools would remain closed for the balance of the 2019-20 academic year, the Illinois High School Association's Board of Directors voted to cancel the 2020 spring state tournament series in all spring sports, and also to suspend the summer contact days for all sports until it's determined by both the Illinois state government and health officials that large gatherings are safe for all involved.

The cancellation of the entire spring season, the first of its kind in the 120-year history of the IHSA, affects all sports --- baseball, softball, boys and girls track and field, boys volleyball, girls soccer, boys tennis, boys and girls water polo, boys and girls lacrosse and bass fishing.

"We support the decision by Gov. (J.B.) Pritzker and the Illinois State Board of Education, and given the logistics, we simply felt we could not conduct state tournaments that meet the expectations of our member schools this spring," IHSA Executive Director Craig Anderson said in a statement in a press release announcing the cancellations. "As disappointing as it may be for students, it is the right decision for their health and safety, as well as the health and safety of the general public, as we cope with this unprecedented pandemic."

If and when the all-clear is given for large gatherings to resume, the IHSA board said that they would be willing to reconsider how the summer contact season would go on, and if schools could conduct any kind of spring sporting events.

"Once it is determined safe to return, we will provide a detailed outline to our schools on the plan for summer contact days, and possibly some kind of spring athletic events," Anderson said in the press release, "including, if the number of days and dates that coaches can meet with athletes has been altered. At this point, though, all that is dependent on state government and medical leaders giving the go-ahead for such."

Anderson expressed sympathy for all the student, athletes, coaches and communities that have been impacted by both the decision to cancel the spring season, and also showed support for health care workers and first responders who have worked hard to help during the current pandemic.

"Our thoughts right now are with all the impacted students, coaches and communities. Especially the seniors," Anderson said. "It will be difficult for them to find a silver lining in all of this, but we stress that even if they don't get the chance to compete again at the high school level, they are better for having been a part of their respective high school teams. By participating in high school sports and activities, they were exposed to life lessons in teamwork, leadership and overcoming adversity that are difficult to replicate elsewhere. The latter is applicable now more than ever. We hope that we can

band together and refocus all of our efforts in supporting the doctors, nurses, first responders and all the other essential personnel who are putting their health and safety on the line each day to keep us safe."

The IHSA will continue to monitor and communicate with state officials and will continue to communicate with the schools about when it's advisable to have its summer contact days and also possibly conduct summertime games with no restrictions on who could play.

"The possibility of playing a spring sports game this summer is about closure," Anderson said. "If we are able to offer this opportunity, no student-athlete would be restricted by having already practiced or competed with a non-school team."