

IHSA Board Of Directors Continue To Monitor COVID-19 Pandemic Situation, Will Not Begin Winter Sporting Season Before Start Of 2021

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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BLOOMINGTON - The Illinois High School Association Board of Directors are continuing to monitor the Tier 3 restrictions brought about by Governor J.B. Pritzker because of the COVID-19 Pandemic, and also stated that the winter sports season won't

begin until after the start of 2021, the organization announced after a special Board meeting held virtually on Wednesday to discuss the topics surrounding the delayed start of the season.

In a statement issued after the meeting, IHSA Executive Director Craig Anderson said that when a timeline is established after the lifting of the restrictions, the IHSA will be in a position to start low-risk sports such as boys and girls bowling as fast as possible.

"Given Gov. Pritzker's current mitigations, the Board has no expectations of starting low-risk winter sports prior to January," Anderson said in a statement released after the meeting concluded. "The Board and IHSA staff will continue to monitor the Tier 3 Resurgence Mitigation in effect currently. When there is a timeline for the state to emerge from these restrictions, the Board is prepared to start low risk winter sports quickly. In addition, the Board hopes to reestablish contact days in January for any winter sports that cannot begin, as well as spring and summer sports. The introduction of contact days will be based on mitigations from the Governor and the Illinois Department of Public Health at that time. Further guidance on contact days limits will be established at a future Board meeting."

There is also the possibility that girls badminton, originally scheduled as a spring sport, will be moved to the winter, as it's considered a low risk sport. The IHSA Board recommended that schools that have girls badminton should begin to prepare for that possibility, as the IHSA could decide to move the sport to winter at its next regularly scheduled meeting, set for Dec. 14. At that meeting, the Board will also discuss the winter state tournament series for each sport, along with adjustment to the by-laws regulating academic eligibility for the current semester and the latest on the Tier 3 mitigations and restrictions.

Also in the statement, Anderson emphasized that the IHSA Board remains committed in creating all opportunities to resume the sporting seasons for the remainder of the 2020-21 school year, and will also evaluate the equity of each season as potential restart dates in January become available.

"The Board appreciates the flexibility displayed by our schools during the pandemic," Anderson said in the statement, "and although they recognize the challenges each modification creates, they continue to ask schools to be adaptable in the new year. The Board continues to evaluate season start and end dates, depending on when the winter season resumes."

Anderson said that the Board has received many questions from member schools regarding the interpretations of the Tier 3 restrictions, and how it affects both the use of weight rooms and open gyms both before and after school. According to the board,

member schools can interpret the restrictions according to the guidance of local health officials and public fitness centers.

"To reiterate, the Board has no expectations to begin any winter sports seasons until 2021," Anderson said, "but will remain agile in their preparation and willingness to adapt should a window present itself sooner."