



# **IHSA Board Of Directors Announce Sporting Seasons For Remainder Of 2020-2021**

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**BLOOMINGTON** - The Illinois High School Association's Board of Directors established dates for an abbreviated winter sports season, along with dates for spring and summer seasons in a special meeting held on Wednesday.

The state tournament series for many sports were also cancelled, included boys and girls basketball, boys and girls bowling, football, wrestling, boys swimming and diving, boys soccer, girls volleyball, girls gymnastics and wrestling. There will be a virtual state series in both competitive cheerleading and dance, while state series in girls badminton, boys gymnastics, boys and girls water polo, baseball, boys and girls lacrosse, girls soccer, softball, boys tennis, boys and girls track and field and boys volleyball will be determined at a later date.

IHSA Executive Director Craig Anderson felt the board took every possible situation into consideration in forming the dates for each season.

"We understood the high anticipation surrounding today's announcement, along with the scrutiny that will accompany it," Anderson said in the press release that accompanied the schedules, "Ultimately, the Board adhered to its stated goals throughout the pandemic, providing an opportunity for every IHSA student-athlete to compete safely this year, and maximizing opportunities for traditional IHSA spring sports after they lost their entire seasons a year ago. I recognize that many schools and coaches could likely offer a tweak here or there that would have, in their opinion, made it 'better' for their school or sport. Our Board faced an impossible task with a litany of factors. They were conscientious in considering every possibility, and I believe their decisions today are a positive step for the mental, emotional and physical well-being of our students. We are excited to channel our energy into creating as many positive experiences for Illinois high school students as we can between now and the end of this extraordinary school year."

Practices for the winter sports --- boys and girls basketball, boys swimming and diving, dance and cheerleading, boys and girls bowling, girls gymnastics and girls badminton --- will begin as soon as possible, with games set to begin seven dates after the start of practice, with each season ending Mar. 13. A virtual state dance series will occur on Feb. 27 and Mar. 6, while the competitive cheerleading series will go on Mar. 6 and 12. There will be no state tournament series in the other sports.

Spring sports, which consist of boys soccer, football, girls volleyball, boys gymnastics and boys and girls water polo, will begin preseason practices in March, with boys soccer starting on Mar. 1, football on Mar. 3, girls volleyball on Mar. 8 and boys gymnastics and boys and girls water polo on Mar. 15. Football can play its first game on Mar. 19, and will have a seven-game season that ends Apr. 24. The other sports can play their openers as early as seven days after the start of practice, with the soccer season ending Apr. 17, and both football and girls volleyball ending Apr. 24. The state tournament

series for each sport will not be played. Boys gymnastics and boys and girls water polo seasons will end May 24, and a state tournament series for both sports has yet to be determined.

The seasons for baseball, boys and girls lacrosse, girls soccer, softball, boys tennis, boys and girls track and field and boys volleyball will begin on Apr. 5, with wrestling starting its season on Apr. 19. Games and meets in all sports can begin seven days after the first practice, with the wrestling season ending on June 12, with the state tournament series not being held, while the other sports' seasons end on June 19, with state tournament series having yet to be determined.

"The Board wants to do everything in their power to prevent spring sports from going two consecutive years with no postseason IHSA play," Anderson said in the press release. "There are obviously no guarantees, as risk levels by sport and local region mitigation statuses will factor significantly. Postseason could mean being limited to a Regional or Sectional level of competition, but we have not ruled out the playing of a full state tournament in these traditional spring sports if possible. The overwhelming feedback we have heard from athletic directors and coaches was that returning to play in all sports should be the main goal."

All sports will be required to hold practices for seven different days before playing their first games, with the exception of football, which will require players to practice for 12 days before being allowed to play. In the case of basketball players or swimmers who will transition to football, they'll be allowed to practice for 10 days before playing in their first game. The start of winter sports will depend on if a region is at Phase Four before games can begin. Region Four, which includes Madison and St. Clair Counties, are currently at Tier Two, the only region in the state at that level, but hope to fall to Tier One soon. Meanwhile, Region Three, which includes Jersey, Greene and Calhoun Counties, are in Phase Four, and will be allowed to have games and events.

In all cases, players, officials, sideline personnel and other will be required to wear masks and observe social distancing, with the exception of swimming and diving, gymnasts competing on an apparatus and in outdoor sports where social distancing rules can be observed.

In a statement issued on the press release, the IHSA's Sports Medicine Advisory Board reminded all participants about the importance of giving close attention to becoming acclimated to all conditions before beginning play.

"The IHSA SMAC reminds member schools that student-athletes may need additional conditioning in order to participate in a full schedule this season," the statement read. "In addition to season and practice requirements, care needs to be given to each student's

individual acclimation as they return to play. When building schedules, attention needs to be given to academic pressure, changes from in-person to remote learning, changes between tiers of mitigation, time spent traveling to events, appropriate time to practice and learn the sport between games, etc., to ensure the student experience truly enhances the academic day."

Anderson also acknowledged that different parts of the state have yet to fall to mitigations that allow the return to play, and encouraged all to continue to make progress in that endeavor.

"We still have regions of the state that need to make strides in order to be able to play basketball this winter," Anderson said. "That underscored the importance of all of our schools following all the mitigations and precautions. We need to maintain a positive trajectory not only to get winter sports going, but to make sure we do not have any regions regress before spring and summer sports have their opportunity. We can all do our part by wearing a mask and social distancing."

The IHSA Board, in a ruling made in October, 2020, allowed student-athletes who were displaced from playing on the school sports teams, such as in basketball during their season could play on both their school and club teams at the same time. On Wednesday, the Board reaffirmed its decision, adding additional sports to its ruling, but also said that both boys and girls players must stop playing for their club teams within seven days of playing their first sanctioned IHSA game.

"We have said from day one if and when we were allowed to play again, the situation would be fluid," Anderson said. "We don't feel great about the notion of some schools falling behind based on their region's status, but also recognize that we are running out of time and can't afford to hold back the regions that can play."

In a separate statement, the IHSA Board said that setting the remainder of the school year schedule was an extremely difficult task, and asked that the players, parents and fans understand that all factors were taken into consideration.

"Unprecedented circumstances create extraordinary decisions," the Board's statement read. "The IHSA Board of Directors faced one of the most difficult decisions in the Association's 100-plus year history today. Please know that we did so with great diligence, empathy and understanding. There were an immense number of factors that went into today's decisions. We knew there would be obstacles no matter what we decided. Whether those hurdles included overlapping seasons for multi-sports athletes, equity between sports, preseason acclimatization guidelines, the prioritization of spring sports, facility conflicts for schools, officiating, and that is just naming a few. Please know that each potential roadblock was recognized and given consideration. The IHSA

membership, like our state, is incredibly large and diverse. Each Board member brought different concerns to the table that impacted their own school or region differently. There was never going to be a one-size-fits-all solution to playing 25 sports seasons in a little over four months. What did occur was collaboration and camaraderie. Each Board member may not have been able to have all their specific concerns addressed, but we worked together to produce a schedule and plan that we believe will work for our student-athletes."