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HIGH SCHOOLS

WIAA moves football, some other fall sports to spring

BY JEFF MORROW
Special to the Herald

High School football fans are going to have to wait until next spring to see their favorite team play.

Same with girls soccer, 1B/2B boys soccer and volleyball.

The Washington Interscholastic Activities Association's executive board decided on Tuesday to move those fall sports to next year as the state tries to get its coronavirus numbers down.

Mick Hoffman, the WIAA executive director, and WIAA executive board president Greg Whitmore unveiled the organization's latest plan to a video and audio news conference of 80 reporters on Tuesday evening.

"I can't begin to put a number to the number of contingency plans we've gone through," Hoffman told the media. "The No. 1 thing we want to do is provide opportunities to athletes."

There will be some sports in the fall: boys and girls cross country, girls slowpitch softball, girls swimming and diving, and alternate seasons for boys and girls golf and tennis.

If the counties aren't in Phase 3 or better by September, the WIAA has a plan to move those fall sports into the spring.

Those alternate seasons



Herald file

The Washington Interscholastic Activities Association's executive board decided Tuesday to move some fall sports, including football, to next spring.

for golf and tennis have always been available and many west side schools do take advantage of their fall weather to hold those.

But state championships are still in the spring for golf and tennis.

Girls swimming and diving still has to get approval from the state department of health to move forward in September.

The bottom line is some sports considered low or moderate risks have to have a Phase 3 in order for student-athletes to compete.

High risk sports, such as football, volleyball and wrestling, Hoffman says the Phase must be a 4-plus. The state has yet to

determine what that phase looks like.

Hoffman said if a student-athlete or coach was to test positive for COVID-19, they would have to self-quarantine for 14 days.

The WIAA, he said, does not have a budget for a testing plan. So much of that would be left up to the coach, the athletic director, the school or the district.

Here is the breakdown of the four sports seasons in this latest plan:

WIAA SEASON 1

Boy and girls cross country, boys and girls golf (alternate season), girls swimming and diving (contingent on health

department approval), girls slowpitch softball, and boys and girls tennis (alternate season).

Both Hoffman and Whitmore stressed that if the COVID-19 numbers and the county phases aren't good, all of the above sports could be moved to Season 3.

Season 1 would begin Sept. 7-13 with practices, and competition would start Sept. 14 and would run until the week of Nov. 2-8, which would be championships week.

WIAA SEASON 2

The season would begin with a week of practices Jan. 4-10, and would involve boys and girls basketball, girls bowling, cheer, gymnastics, boys swimming and diving, and boys and girls wrestling.

The season would run from Jan. 11 to Feb. 28, with championships being held March 1-7.

WIAA SEASON 3

This would include football, girls soccer, 1B/2B boys soccer, and volleyball.

The soccer and volleyball would have a week of practices beginning March 1, and the season would run through May 2, with WIAA tournaments set for April 27-May 2.

Football teams would actually have two weeks of practices running from Feb. 22 to March 7, and football playoffs would be

for two weeks, ending May 9.

WIAA SEASON 4

This would involve baseball, dance and drill, golf, boys 1A through 4A soccer, girls fastpitch softball, tennis and boys and girls track and field.

Practices would be from April 26 to May 2, and the season would run to June 20. The WIAA playoffs would be the week of June 21-27.

"It's a fluid situation," Hoffman warned. "It all could change tomorrow. These dates are definitely written in pencil."

The current plan is just for high school activities.

"I'll be honest with you, we have not addressed middle school sports," Whitmore said.

But middle school sports could follow a similar pattern.

Whitmore said this is actually the second time the WIAA has had to work through a pandemic.

"But we couldn't find the minutes of the plan in the pandemic of 1918 during the Spanish Flu," he said.

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

Whitmore also warned the media that there are still many questions to be answered. The executive board will meet again next week to start working on answering those questions and set some criteria.

"We know some of the decisions we're making are important to a lot of kids," he said. "We felt we could not get the high risk sport of football in the fall. Same with volleyball."

The WIAA did not schedule any sports from Nov. 9 to Jan. 3, based on the fact that flu season could kick up again and sports would be heading back indoors.

Whitmore says the board does not have an answer yet concerning whether school districts may not go to in-person learning yet, and what that would do to sports.

State tournaments as people have known them these past few years may not look the same. They'll be shortened, as will each regular season.

"Schools will know the start dates, and the date when we need their (post-season) qualifying team," said Whitmore.

The task on what those regular seasons look like will be put on the leagues.

Decisions will be made later on whether a post-season might be a regional championship, district championship, or a possible state-wide championship.

As there might be some overlap in some sports, especially if a team makes it into postseason, some athletes may have to make a tough choice if they play multiple sports.

"One of our goals it to have athletes not have to choose between two sports," said Whitmore.

Hoffman agreed.

"We're actually adding a season," said Hoffman. "I would hope we could have some four-sport athletes."

Jeff Morrow is the former sports editor for the Tri-City Herald.