

Covid-19 disrupts high school athletics

By Alyssa Laukus

Has your practice or game schedule been modified this year? If so what has changed?



Kylie Mihalov

"We had a decrease in games so we didn't have very many out of section games. And we didn't get to have any of our camps over the summer."

What is something you miss about your sport from before COVID-19?



Ashley Laukus

"The season was cut in half so we did not get to play any of our section games, we also missed a lot of time for skill development."

Walking into the high school gym, you will see athletes wearing masks, they are socially distanced, and getting their temperatures taken before practice. This is the new reality of high school athletics due to the COVID-19 regulations.

Athletics this year across the nation has changed and many athletes are not too happy about it. Many teams have been forced into quarantine causing them to miss important games, and other teams have been forced to wear masks during practice and games.

"Having to wear masks and having to fill out our COVID surveys before practice," said Chloe, a junior on the Norwin High School girls basketball team, about some of the most annoying restrictions that come along with COVID-19.

These changes have become the new normal for fall and winter sports. The restrictions and rules forced onto the athletes take away from the experience of playing a sport in high school.

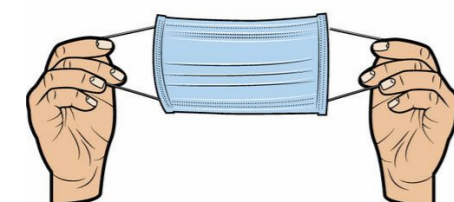
Based on a recent poll answered by over 80 student-athletes at Norwin High School, 97 percent of the athletes polled believe that with all of the restrictions and new rules introduced to their sport during COVID-19 it has drastically changed their playing experience.

"I think the limited people able to attend gatherings had a tremendous impact," said a Norwin girls soccer player. "The entire team was not able to travel to certain away games and many events were cancelled due to restrictions on large group gatherings."

At the start of fall sports this year, the regulations included things such as: socially distancing in pods during practice, only a certain amount of people allowed to be indoor and outdoor gatherings, and limits on spectators permitted in sporting events.

According to the PIAA website in the fall: "Any school

Athletes have to wear masks



Temperatures are taken daily



COVID-19 guidelines for high school athletics

<https://tribhssn.triblive.com/return-policy-answering-the-big-questions-as-wpiat-teams-get-back-on-the-court/>

Social distance must be maintained



Schedule has been adjusted



The Norwin High School girls basketball team prepares for their season during COVID-19.

sport related activities in Yellow or Green phased Counties must adhere to the gathering limitations set forth by the Governor's Plan for Phased Reopening (25 in yellow, 250 outdoors and 25 indoors in green) and the facility as a whole may not exceed 50% of total occupancy otherwise permitted by law." During the Yellow and Green phases of reopening, sports-related activities at the PK-12 level are limited to student athletes, coaches, officials, and staff only. The addition of visitors and spectators will be contingent upon future health conditions within the state and local communities."

But, during winter sports these restrictions are heightened and more added to the list. Student athletes have to wear masks during games and practices, as well as attempting to stay socially distanced. Not only are the sports in the winter given more restrictions, winter sports are presently postponed until January 4.

According to an article from the Pittsburgh Post Gazette, "Wolf announced Thursday (12/10) afternoon that all school and youth sports, including club and intramural, are suspended until Jan. 4 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Teams can't play games or practice, and Wolf suspended all extracurricular activities at schools."

The COVID-19 pandemic has not only affected the student-athletes participating in the sport, but the coaches have also been affected by all of the rules and regulations put in place. These things not only need to be followed by the athletes but the coaches as well.

"Some obvious are the mask and limited fan base in addition to an increase in organizational time," said Coach Brian Brozeski, the coach of the girls basketball team. "Hours each week are lost because we need to create screening documents and provide medical input rather than breaking down game film and putting practice plans together."

Not only are the physical restrictions placed on the athletes, there is also restriction to the amount of attendance for games. Fans are something that make playing any sport so much more enjoyable.

According to over 80 Norwin High School student athletes polled, over 96 percent who responded preferred to have fans at their events rather than no fans.

"I missed being able to have fans at our events," said a 10th grade Norwin volleyball player, "They definitely bring a different atmosphere to the gym."

"Over my 20 plus years of coaching, no one thing has ever affected the sports environment more than COVID, and unfortunately I think there will be lingering effects for years to come," said by Coach Brozeski. "Even though the hope for the athletes in the new year is that the pandemic will not continue to halter their athletic experience any further, it is unlikely that that will be true."

This COVID-19 pandemic could continue to affect these high school sports for much more time to come.

Has your practice or game schedule been modified this year? If so what has changed?



Chloe Lukoni

"Yes, we're playing less games. We are only playing section games so we make sure to get them all in on time. And senior night is earlier in the season."

What is something you miss about your sport from before COVID-19?



Mara Polczynski

"I miss how close the team was able to get in the past, this season we have not been able to spend as much time together as a team."