

Wednesday, January 20, 2020

IHSA Athletics remain on pause; board will meet again January 27

The Illinois High School Association (IHSA) Board of Directors met for its regularly scheduled meeting on Wednesday, January 13, 2021, where the Board announced that all IHSA sports not operating under an official IHSA season calendar may begin to conduct contact days as soon as they are allowable per Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) mitigations and local school guidance. Contact days normally exist within the IHSA as informal voluntary offseason workouts.

"The IHSA acknowledges the immense mental, emotional, and physical strain that a lack of contact with school programs is causing Illinois high school student-athletes," said IHSA Executive Director Craig Anderson. "It is our intention that these contact days provide sport-specific training under the leadership of high school coaches. This is an effort to provide a viable sports option to high school athletes given the growing number of student-athletes opting for higher risk opportunities within the state and across state lines."

Additionally, the Board reviewed several options outlining a sports schedule framework for the remainder of the school year. The Board directed the IHSA staff to



take feedback from today's meeting, as well as any insight gained in the coming weeks, and bring forward viable scheduling options for a special Board meeting on January 27, 2021. The Board will provide an update following that meeting.

Once state leadership allows for low-risk winter sports (Boys & Girls Bowling, Cheerleading, Dance, Girls Gymnastics, Boys Swimming & Diving) to begin participation, those teams will be allowed to begin practice immediately and then continue their season

through the season calendar established by the Board later this month.

The IHSA Board of Directors released a joint statement following the meeting meeting:

"We realize there is a desire for finality on a sports schedule for 2020-21, however, we did not believe it would be prudent to lock ourselves into a schedule at a time when IHSA schools are unable to conduct any sports. Per Governor Pritzker, we have hope that low-risk sports may be permitted in certain regions of the state

as early as this Friday (January 15). With that in mind, February seems like a realistic timeline to have sports resume statewide. We expect that the events of the next two weeks will go a long way toward informing our opinion on which scheduling option we decide to proceed with. We recognize that if no sports have resumed by February, season lengths could be impacted in certain sports, and that we may need to take a longer look at the likelihood of true seasons being conducted in high-risk sports this year. Our overall

goal remains unchanged, as we hope to conduct all IHSA sports during the remainder of the school year calendar. Please know that we see and read many of the comments and messages from student-athletes, coaches, and parents, and that we are doing everything we can to try and bring IHSA sports back within the current parameters we are working in."

The IHSA successfully conducted seasons in golf, girls tennis, cross country, and girls swimming & diving through Sectional competition this fall, but all IHSA

sports have been paused since November 20.

"We remain collaborative in our efforts with IDPH and the Governor's office," said Anderson. "We are trying to do our part to fight the pandemic, while simultaneously seeking safe participation opportunities for our student-athletes. We understand the real mental toll this pause in athletics is having on Illinois high school student-athletes. We believe that school-based athletic participation is better regulated, making it the safest participation option for our students, and more data continues to emerge supporting that stance. We will continue to share that information with state leadership in hopes that we can work together to provide participation opportunities for young people in our state."

Editor's Note: Illinois Governor JB Pritzker announced on January 15, 2021, that three regions in the state (1, 2, 5) are being rolled back from Tier 3 mitigations to Tier 2 mitigations. On January 16, Region 5 moved to Tier 1 mitigations. The announcement allows further participation opportunities for IHSA schools located in Regions that are under Tier 2 mitigations and Tier 1 mitigations.

United Association Local 149 supports local charities during holidays

Donations made to four local non-profit groups as chosen by members

A recent social media competition resulted in four local charities receiving donations in the names of four members of United Association Local 149.

The Boy Scouts of America - Prairielands Council, Rattle The Stars, American Cancer Society and Prairie Rivers Network benefitted from the contest sponsored by Local 149. For all of December, the union encouraged members to engage

with their posts for a chance to win union merchandise every week. The union also announced that each weekly winner would have the chance to choose a local charity to receive a \$100 donation in their name.

* Eric Bialeschki, a union technician at Davis Houk Mechanical, selected the Boy Scouts to receive his contribution after he grew up as a member of the Prairielands Council and his 15-year-old

son is now involved. "They do a great job of teaching leadership qualities and good values," he said.

* Ryan Mette, who works for A&R Mechanical, made his contribution to Rattle The Stars, a Champaign organization focused on mental health services and suicide prevention. "I had a close friend who suffered from depression and shortly after high school, he committed suicide. I wanted to contribute

to a group helping people in those situations."

* Zach Ayers, a first-year apprentice working at the University of Illinois, has had family members who've fought cancer and, as a result, selected the American Cancer Society to receive his \$100 contribution. "I thought it was important to do my part and help an organization helping so many others," he said.

* Dustin Rhodes, who

works at the University of Illinois, is an avid outdoorsman and Eagle Scout who has canoed the Middle Fork River several times and supports environmental efforts there by the Prairie Rivers Network. "There are endangered species living there, it's in our back yard and coal ash leeching into the river banks isn't helping. I wanted to help the people responsible for trying to clean it up. Everyone should be able to

enjoy it."

Local 149 represents more than 600 East Central Illinois residents in Ford, Champaign, Coles, Cumberland, Effingham, Jasper and Piatt counties. Members work for more than 40 local companies providing plumbing, heating, air conditioning, refrigeration, steam, industrial process, boiler and medical-gas piping services.

Emanuel "Chris" Welch makes history as first Black Illinois House speaker

Issues call for unity while Durkin blasts former Speaker Madigan

By Peter Hancock
 Capitol News Illinois

Rep. Emanuel "Chris" Welch made history Wednesday by becoming the first Black person elected speaker of the Illinois House, succeeding Rep. Michael Madigan, who leaves the job after serving for 36 of the past 38 years.

The House came into session Wednesday afternoon to begin the 102nd General Assembly just moments after it adjourned a rare lame duck session that ended the 101st biennial session.

Speaking on the floor of the Bank of Springfield Center — where the House has been meeting to allow for social distancing due to the COVID-19 pandemic — the Hillside Democrat issued a call for unity, vowing that he would no longer refer to other House members as "Democrats" or "Republicans."

"Today will be the last time I talk about us as Democrats or Republicans because I want to talk about us being united," Welch said in his inaugural speech. "We're going to work together to move

this state forward."

Welch was elected speaker by a vote of 70-44 over House Minority Leader Jim Durkin, R-Western Springs. And while Durkin opened his remarks by saying he was "extending an olive branch of cooperation, starting today," he then launched a verbal polemic against Madigan, who is leaving the speaker's office amid a cloud of corruption allegations.

"While his reign as speaker is all but over, his decades in power will never be erased," Durkin said. "What we have here through this unique and rare opportunity is the ability to break from the past, to break that business model, because they are as apparent as the masks on our face."

Last summer, Durkin initiated the petition that forced the House to form a special investigating committee to probe Madigan's role in a bribery scheme involving utility giant Commonwealth Edison and determine whether disciplinary actions should commence.

But it was Welch who chaired that committee and made sure it did not recommend disciplinary action.

Madigan, who on Monday announced he was suspending his bid to remain speaker, issued a statement Wednesday congratulating Welch as "speaker-elect" minutes before lawmakers were set to make the vote official.

"As I prepare to pass the speaker's gavel to a new generation of Democratic leadership, I want to thank the people of my district and the members of the House Democratic Caucus for the faith and trust they have placed in me over the years," Madigan said in the statement. "I want to thank my staff for their hard work on behalf of every member of this caucus. It has been the honor of a lifetime to help bring people of different experiences and backgrounds together to serve our state."

"It is time for new leadership in the House. I wish all the best for Speaker-elect Welch as he begins a historic speakership. It is my sincere



Photo: Justin L. Fowler, The State Journal-Register
 House Speaker Emanuel "Chris" Welch, D-Hillside, delivers his remarks after taking the Oath of Office on Wednesday at the Bank of Springfield Center.

hope today that the caucus I leave to him and to all who will serve alongside him is stronger than when I began. And as I look at the large and diverse Democratic majority we have built — full of young leaders ready to

continue moving our state forward, strong women and people of color, and members representing all parts of our state — I am confident Illinois remains in good hands."

Capitol News Illinois is a

nonprofit, nonpartisan news service covering state government and distributed to more than 400 newspapers statewide. It is funded primarily by the Illinois Press Foundation and the Robert R. McCormick Foundation.

WWW.FORDOFTUSCOLA.COM
 217-253-3353
 ON 36 IN TUSCOLA
 SMALL TOWN FEEL, GREAT BIG DEALS

THE WORKS OIL CHANGE

\$39.95

2021 SERVICE SPECIAL!

"The Works"

Oil Change, Tire Rotation, and Inspection

Max 5qt Oil, Not applicable to Diesels, Plus tax & fees. Expires 3/31/2021