



Photos: Rachel Ray
Left: Summer Phillips from the Douglas County Health Department explains follow up procedures after the first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine at the Douglas County Health Department's COVID-19 vaccine clinic on January 28. **Right:** Tuscola Resident, Wanda Long, received her COVID-19 vaccine during the vaccination clinic held at the Tuscola Community Building.

IHSA Board announces sports schedule for remainder Of 2020-21

The IHSA Board of Directors met for a special board meeting on January 27, 2021, where the Board provided an updated sports schedule and other guidance for the remainder of the 2020-21 school year.

"We understood the high level of anticipation surrounding today's announcement, along with the scrutiny that will accompany it," said IHSA Executive Director Craig Anderson. "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 season 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."

The Board is considering State Series competition for traditional IHSA spring sports only. Dance and cheerleading will be allowed to conduct virtual Sectional and State Final meets, as they will record their performances and submit them to be judged.

"The Board wants to do everything in their power to prevent spring sports from going two consecutive years with no postseason IHSA play," said Anderson. "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 idea of playing a full

Sport	IDPH Risk	Practices Start	Practice Dates Before Games	State Series	End Date
Boys/Girls Basketball	Higher	ASAP	7 dates	No State Series	March 13
Boys Swimming & Diving	Lower	ASAP	7 dates	No State Series	March 13
Dance	Lower	ASAP	7 dates	Virtual (2/27 & 3/6)	March 13
Cheerleading	Lower	ASAP	7 dates	Virtual (3/6 & 3/12)	March 13
Boys/Girls Bowling	Lower	ASAP	7 dates	No State Series	March 13
Girls Gymnastics	Lower	ASAP	7 dates	No State Series	March 13
Badminton	Lower	ASAP	7 dates	TBD	April 3
Boys Soccer	Moderate	March 1	7 dates	No State Series	April 17
Football	Higher	March 3	1st Game March 19	No State Series	April 24
Girls Volleyball	Moderate	March 8	7 dates	No State Series	April 24
Boys Gymnastics	Lower	March 15	7 dates	TBD	May 22
Boys/Girls Water Polo	Moderate	March 15	7 dates	TBD	May 29
Baseball	Lower	April 5	7 dates	TBD	June 19
Boys/Girls Lacrosse	Higher	April 5	7 dates	TBD	June 19
Girls Soccer	Moderate	April 5	7 dates	TBD	June 19
Softball	Lower	April 5	7 dates	TBD	June 19
Boys Tennis	Lower	April 5	7 dates	TBD	June 19
Boys/Girls Track & Field	Lower	April 5	7 dates	TBD	June 19
Boys Volleyball	Moderate	April 5	7 dates	TBD	June 19
Wrestling	Higher	April 19	7 dates	No State Series	June 12

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."

With the exception of football, which requires individuals to participate in practice on 12 different days, all sports will be required to hold practice on seven different days prior to holding a contest. Holding multiple practices on a date does not impact that timeline. If student-athletes transition from basketball or boys swimming & diving into football, they will need to participate in practice on 10 different days prior to their first contest. Winter sport contests could begin as early as today, dependent on when a school's Region reached the appropriate mitigation status and

when they began practices.

The IHSA Sports Medicine Advisory Committee (SMAC) issued a statement reminding all student-athletes, coaches, and schools on the importance of acclimatization:

"The IHSA SMAC reminds member schools that student-athletes may need additional conditioning in order to participate in a full schedule this season. In addition to season/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/learn the sport between games, etc. to ensure the student experience truly

enhances the academic day."

IHSA guidelines require all student-athletes to participate in masks (with the exception of swimming & diving, gymnasts on an apparatus and outdoor events where social distancing can occur) and for all game personnel not participating in the contest to also wear masks and adhere to social distancing.

"We still have regions of the state that need to make strides in order to be able to play basketball this winter," said Anderson. "That underscores the importance 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 socially distancing."

The Board also agreed to consider other participation opportunities for a given sport, like basketball, if the sport is unable to be played in a specific region.

"We have said from day one that if and when we were allowed to play again this year, the situation would be fluid," said Anderson. "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 October, the Board ruled that students who play sports (football, boys soccer, girls volleyball) that were displaced from their traditional season could participate on high school and non-school teams simultaneously. The Board affirmed this position

in Wednesday's meeting with additional sports moving out of their traditional seasons, and also ruled that girls and boys basketball players will need to cease non-school team participation within seven days of their first high school game.

All sports that are out-of-season can conduct contact days through June 4. Contact days are limited to three days per week per sport with a maximum of six hours of contact per week with no interscholastic competition.

The IHSA Board of Directors issued the following statement on the day's events:

"Unprecedented circumstances create extraordinary decisions. 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-sport 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 of their specific concerns addressed, but we worked together to produce a schedule and plan that we believe will work for our student-athletes."

KCSummers

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 WINNERS DRAWN LIVE ON FRIDAYS ALL MONTH LONG!
 NO PURCHASE NECESSARY. ONE ENTRY PER PERSON.