August 7, 2020

This week’s message to the members is provided by Jeremy Schlitz, CAA, WADA Past President:

WADA Members,

I have received a lot of questions and observed many decision making processes and the associated discussions regarding high school learning models and the affiliated decisions regarding athletics in the last few weeks and months. I want to share some of the foundation and rationale behind those decisions I observed from my perspective as I think it will help all of us find ways to process and actively work to bring us together as soon as possible. No one wants to return to in-person and traditional models more than I do but we need to do it in a planful manner to allow it to be a long term solution and not a fleeting attempt. I also recognize and respect that some will continue to try to forge onward as scheduled in their circumstance with added precautions and restrictions and appreciate those efforts immensely.

As we are seeing from other attempts to return to sport at different levels this decision is about the level of risk we are willing to take and ability to assign resources to address those risks. The focus has been on student, teacher, player, coach, and personnel safety. The safety we should also be considering is public safety and public health as the best way to minimize the spread and to be able to effectively return to desired state of minimal restrictions is to minimize contacts of and between individuals as much as possible. Sports by nature is a gathering whether it is within the team, between teams, or the broader community and we know that we cannot create a bubble at the high school level. We can find ways to limit and mitigate risk; by doing that we are compromising some of the benefits of education based athletics.

We need partnership from the non-school and for-profit entities that are still encouraging gatherings and competitions to not be destructive of progress and sacrifice. We need individuals to make decisions to be uncomfortable or inconvenienced to allow a return most quickly to the familiar. This is the same lesson of we being greater than me that we hold dear in education based athletics and the core value of teamwork.

Many questions are asked and answers may not be at the ready as we do not know what the virus will do or the science will tell us but we will continue to find new ways to connect and engage through the framework of education and sport. We need to be open to new ways to look at these questions and have meaningful discourse across schools, sports, and communities.

Does social emotional learning and mental health support have the same effectiveness if we are masked? Does high school athletics effectively go on if we cannot have family, classmates, and friends participate as spectators? Does making modifications to rules or protective equipment still make the benefits of sport as genuine and valuable? Can we find another way to get the same desired impact of connection and physical fitness? How do we best serve all of our students, athletes, and communities?
Can we use virtual platforms to congregate for fellowship and fitness? Can we stay together while still being physically apart? Can this change of focus allow for great things to occur beyond the playing field and competition center? Can we find value in education based athletics without competition or recognition?

We want to conserve the traditions but this can be a great time to innovate and reinvent. To recognize the unique value of the right to an education and the privilege of education based athletics is to understand its importance as a partner in the greater community. We may need to sacrifice some of the traditions and past practices for a short period of time to allow our communities to stay healthy and get more under control of the public health emergency and response. We need to be willing to make those sacrifices for a bigger group, that is foundational to what we teach through athletics to become better students, leaders, athletes, and citizens.

Please encourage all to be kind and empathetic to these decisions and all viewpoints and support each other by following public health guidelines, wearing a mask, and practicing social distancing so we can get back to the conserved experience that is high school athletics for all.

#TeamUpToBeatCOVID

Be well and stay well,

Jeremy Schlitz, CAA

ITEMS of INTEREST

1. We are looking to gather information from membership for Nathan Delany, WADA President-Elect, our WIAA Liaison, to use at next week's WIAA Board of Control meeting. Please take a few minutes to fill out this WADA Survey for the purpose of providing that information.

2. If you were not able to join us for last week's WADA ADInsider Roundtable event you can watch it on demand by clicking on this LINK.

3. Please remember to check out gowada.org for regular updates and resources. If you would like to share resources or templates we would love to have your submissions, please email to Eric Plitzuweit, eplitzuweit@basd.k12.wi.us

4. WADA Board/District Reps Updates:

**District 1 - Mary Schradle-Mau, Turtle Lake** - District 1 ADs are working hard within their conferences to develop plans for a hopeful fall season. At the same time, backroom chats focus on the Board of Control meeting next week and what the decisions made at that meeting have in store for us. Whatever the future holds, ADs are committed to doing everything they can to provide any and all opportunities to their student athletes possible. We will be creative to do what we can for our student-athletes!

**District 2 - Brian Margelofsky, CAA, Northland Pines** - In the last two weeks parents have heard that the WIAA pushed back fall sports and also that the governor mandated masks. What does that mean for athletics in your district? It is essential that at this time you are communicating accurate information about what your school district is doing with your coaches, athletes, and parents about fall sports. Some information you still
may not have answers for yet as things are changing daily. Do your best to stay on top of informing everyone with up-to-date information. As many families may have concerns of what September brings, try to lower their stress level with some optimistic news.

**District 3 - Jim Langkamp, Baraboo** - On the WADA website this month the [2019 District 3 AD of the Year](https://www.wada.org), Bruce Schweisthal, is featured with the video that was shown during the WADA Conference Awards Luncheon. The 2019 Distinguished Service Award winner from District 3 ([Bob Goodhue from Adams-Friendship](https://www.wada.org)) will be featured later this month. We appreciate the work Eric Plitzuweit does with the [WADA website](https://www.wada.org). This is a nice addition!

**District 4 - Kathy Bates, CMAA, Appleton Xavier** - With so many conferences in district 4 making the decision to schedule conference-only events for this fall, it is important that we each notify any non-conference schools we were scheduled to have hosted or to have been hosted by. Do not assume that opposing school athletic directors know what your conference plans are!

**District 5 - Brittany Spencer Grant, CMAA, New Glarus** - I’m looking to develop a professional development list of reading materials (books, articles, etc). These could be aimed at students, coaches, administrations, parents, etc. If you have a suggested read, please consider adding it to this [Google Form](https://docs.google.com/forms). I’m hoping to make this a great resource for myself, but also for all of our great AD’s!

**District 6 - Eric Plitzuweit, CAA, Burlington** - We continue to witness change to fall athletics across the district, state, and country. The decisions being made are impacting how we have operated in the past, but just like with everything in this pandemic, it is important to find the positives. As fluid as these last months have been, hopefully we have found ways to rise above the adversity we have all faced and discovered the importance of networking and being informed. Todd Gongwer is quoted as saying that “every challenge, struggle, and disappointment in life has a transformative purpose for the leader who is willing to face and embrace it.” Continue to be advocates for your student athletes, coaches, and the education-based athletic programming in our schools. As conferences develop plans for the fall and beyond, please feel free to share these out with colleagues within our WADA organization. Thanks again for all you do!

**District 7- Michelle Guyant-Holloway, Wauwatosa East** - Here are the notes from our recent District 7 meeting along with the chat comments as well. Thanks again for those that joined the meeting, good discussion points and I’m sure we’ll have another sometime later this month.

**Chat Comments/Questions** - [Agenda Notes](https://docs.google.com/forms)

5. July 28, 2020 WADA [Board Meeting Minutes](https://docs.google.com/forms)
The next WADA Board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, August 11, 2020 @ 9:00 AM.

Feel free to contact your District Rep with any items you would like brought to the Board to discuss.

6. The latest from the NFHS - “[Students’ Needs for High School Sports, Performing Arts Drives Decisions to Restart Programs](https://www.nfhs.org/newsroom/newsletter-september-2020)” by Dr. Karissa L. Niehoff, NFHS Executive Director

7. From our WIAA Liaison, Tom Shafranski:

Dear Athletic Director,
Welcome to August!! This is the time of year when excitement fills the air as fall sports get underway and our lives become extremely busy as each program organizes and returns to
school. High school sports, for those schools who are able in Wisconsin, will occur this fall, even under the hindrance of a national pandemic.

All of us here at the WIAA office, want you to know we recognize the added stress and strain placed on Athletic Directors as the delayed fall sports season approaches. We have received many, many questions from school administrators throughout the State and are working with the Wisconsin Athletic Director’s Association (WADA) and our many other COVID-19 resources to resolve each one of them.

Please know that the WIAA Board of Control will be meeting next Friday, August 14, and our executive staff has prepared numerous recommendations for them to review. Remain steadfast in your planning and your responses to coaches and parents. We will have additional answers for you in short order.

We truly appreciate your patience and understanding as we prepare to reopen high school sports on August 17 (Girls Golf, Girls Tennis, Girls Swimming and Diving Boys and Girls Cross Country) and September 7 (Football, Girls and Boys Volleyball, Boys Soccer). Working together, we'll provide a safe, quality, education-based athletic experience for student-athletes throughout our WIAA membership.

Sincerely,
Tom Shafranski, CAA
Assistant Director,
WADA Liaison

8. **Message from Dave Anderson, WIAA Executive Director:**

Since last week, the sport specific and fall sport guidance that the sport executives have been developing has been turned over to the MD’s of our Sport Medical Advisory. We are hopeful to see it reviewed and returned to us in the coming days. That new guidance will be provided to members as soon as possible following its return.

At next week’s Board of Control meeting the Board will be asked to consider a number of “Covid Accommodations.” These will include a variety of one-year accommodations for things such as: non-school competition, official’s classification, covid-co-ops, scheduling relief and more. Also stemming from the SWWi - Second Semester 3 Seasons proposal and the Board’s July 23 directive to staff, the Board will also be reviewing several possible models for “alternative” sport seasons. Staff have used the SWWi proposal along with suggestions from WADA and other individual members to put together several models for the Board to consider. **Knowing the persisting interest in this conversation, this meeting will again be live-streamed.**

In addition to all of the on-going Covid related focus, since last week we have also been working on gaining a clearer understanding of new [Department of Ed, Title IX regulations](https://example.com) pertaining to sexual harassment and assault on campus and/or at school, or within school directed offerings. (May 2020)

Simply stated, these new regulations will require schools to establish a committee and process to review allegations of sexual assault and/or harassment alleged to have occurred within a school and/or within the
The scope of its offerings. In general, the new regulations provide that a student may not be sanctioned until the completion of the process. This provision holds potential to require schools to withhold applying their code of conduct until the review process has been completed. As a result, we will be advising the Board of Control to add the following note to the Rules of Eligibility Art. VII Sect. 3 Code of Conduct.

*This rule is subject to and superseded by the requirements and limitations imposed on the school by Department of Education regulations promulgated under Title IX relating to how schools must respond to allegations of sexual harassment consistent with Part 106 of Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulations.

This is provided as a “heads-up” and is by no means intended to be exhaustive or complete guidance. But as you begin to work with your administrative team it is also worth noting that in application, this is quite specific and fairly narrow. This is really about sexual harassment/assault at school events and/or on premises. Not about sexual harassment in all settings. This does not require the process to be engaged or code of conduct to be deferred for assertions of sexual assault at a party Saturday night – at another student’s home, e.g. As one Attorney shared with me: “The overarching premise is that a district’s obligations are limited to harassment that occurs in programs or activities that the district controls (on school grounds or off school grounds).” This is new. If you haven’t already, you will want to begin discussing this with your administrative team, Board of Ed and legal counsel.

Lastly, all of us are being flooded with news, research and personal opinions regarding Covid, the start-up of school and school sports. We have all heard, read and considered the many points of view being shared regarding the need - as well as their perils, depending upon which path we choose in going forward. Personally, I believe there are many “truths” in this discussion and the point here is not to set any one ahead or be dismissive of any other.

The only point I will offer is that we ought to be clear-eyed in our understanding and awareness - that if schools do not offer sport – there should be absolutely no doubt that someone else will. While we hold at arm's-length the opportunities for kids to be involved with their teammates and coaches, in the hopes of being able to provide best chances for the return to school, kids and parents are doing their own things and turning to non-school providers and will be returning to school following a large, multi-team event that was held somewhere in – or out of state - and they will be bringing all of that exposure back to school with them. Of course there are no easy answers in this debate, but it is my personal belief that no one will be more thorough, careful and conscientious in offering sport opportunities than you and your school’s parents and coaches.

Take Care / Keep Well.
Thanks for your efforts.

Dave Anderson