

School reopening criteria made fall sports season more unlikely

The OSAA executive board is set to meet next week to further discuss how to proceed with the fall sports season. The executive board last week delayed the start of the season to Sept. 23, and cited the need for more guidance from state authorities on their plan to reopen schools.

The guidance is now here, and it just made OSAA's job a heckuva lot tougher.

Gov. Kate Brown and the Oregon Health Authority essentially laid out a numbers-based criteria for school's to meet in each county — and, the state as a whole — to reopen their doors to in-person learning in the fall.

Academics and athletics at the prep level go hand-in-hand — academics need to be in place for athletics to happen. No school, no sports.

It will be interesting to see if districts that engage in only distance learning elect to allow students to play sports.

A report Wednesday from the Corvallis Gazette-Times stated the Corvallis School District is suspending athletic activities until further notice, noting the need for in-person learning.

Portland Public Schools and Salem-Keizer Public Schools also elected to proceed with distance learning until November, according to The Oregonian and Salem Statesman Journal, respectively. And a press release from Eugene 4J Schools this week said it is going with online learning until October at the earliest.

If other districts follow the lead of Corvallis that in-person learning is required to play in the fall, the decisions may force OSAA's hand, but I'll come back to that in a moment.

By the new standards, the state needs to have three weeks in a row with a positive test rate for COVID-19 of 5% or less. Oregon last week was under that mark for the first time in a month when it ticked in at 4.8%, but this week, as of Wednesday, the state is trending at 5.7%.

Even if you hit that standard, the county numbers still will be tricky. Yes, there is an exception that allows counties a higher mark, but the exception is only triple the number of cases each week.

Union County needs to have less than three cases per week (less than nine under the exception) for three straight weeks to open schools, and, by extension, sports. No cases in a week helps, and two more weeks would allow the county's schools to reopen. But one uptick that may seem small at first (for instance, five cases in back-to-back days) at any time could reset the county clock or, if in-person was in place, move it back to distance learning only.

Here is where the bigger issue comes into play for OSAA: having 36 counties to account for, and schools in each of those counties. You'll likely have counties that meet the criteria and others that don't. Multnomah, Umatilla, Malheur or Marion counties aren't opening anytime soon. How then does OSAA put a statewide plan in place for the fall season when you have some counties that will qualify for a sports season and others that won't?

Now circle back to the conundrum with the move by Portland, Salem, Eugene and Corvallis education leaders. How does OSAA not only put a plan in play that can accommodate metrics for each county, but with four major districts —

ones with large high schools — out of the picture?

In a conversation last week, Elgin Athletic Director Jeff Rysdam said one suggestion is to have the leagues/districts each school

plays in to have athletics make the call on how they handle the fall schedule. Maybe play a set of league games and have a league tournament, just so the student-athletes can have a season, even if OSAA can't move forward.

With what has come down in the last couple of days, that is likely the only way there will be athletics in the fall.

The only other choice seems to be to move the fall season to the spring, as NAIA and several states already have done.



RONALD BOND
SPORTS EDITOR

Grande Ronde Hospital and Clinics proudly welcomes: **Brooke Davis, DO**

To the **GRH Regional Medical Clinic** team as a **Primary Care Provider (PCP)**

Dr. Brooke Davis joins the GRH Regional Medical Clinic from Joint Base Andrews in Maryland, where she served as a family physician and clinic medical director for the past three years. Dr. Davis is a four year veteran of the US Air Force, a graduate of the A.T. Still University School of Osteopathic Medicine, and completed her residency at Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center in Corvallis, Oregon. She is a 4th generation Oregonian, and is happy to be near family here in Eastern Oregon. Dr. Davis loves full-spectrum family medicine, especially geriatric and lifestyle medicine, and uses Osteopathic Manipulative Treatments (OMT) in her daily practice as part of a whole-person integrated approach to treating her patients. In her free time, she enjoys outdoor activities like hiking and camping, watching football, and spending time with her husband and two sons. Join us in welcoming osteopathic physician Brooke Davis back to the Grande Ronde Valley!



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