

Sports

BHS ready to start summer workouts

By Corey Kirk
ckirk@bakercityherald.com

Baker High School athletes missed the spring season but they'll soon be able to start unofficial summer practices.

Students will be able to run across fields, the clanking of barbells will come from the weight room, and cross-country runners can get in their miles.

Starting Friday, June 12, BHS will reopen its facilities, with restrictions, for athletes.

"You want to get kids out and healthy," Baker School District Athletic Director Buell Gonzales Jr. said. "That ability to share space with people and interact to compete is very good for us."

On May 20 the Oregon School Activities Association, which oversees high school athletics, announced a three-phase plan for resuming prep sports.

Gonzales noted that the plan isn't set in stone, so school districts have to be ready to change.

"There is just not a lot of solid data yet, I just want to keep people safe, and there are so many unknowns," he said.

OSAA doesn't allow coaches to organize or participate in summer workouts, but they can communicate with students and be present to ensure safety.

In addition to canceling spring sports, the OSAA, in accordance with executive orders from Oregon Gov. Kate Brown and guidelines from the Oregon Health Authority, has not allowed students to practice this spring.

"The OSAA has been very accessible, the information was out plenty of advance," Gonzales said. "They were in the same boat we were, waiting on the information coming from the government."

But starting June 12 limited practices can resume.

"We have to make sure there are six feet between each individual, keep our pod sizes ten or fewer with the max of 25, and outside will be way easier," Gonzales said.

"That ability to share space with people and interact to compete is very good for us."

— Buell Gonzales Jr., Baker School District athletic director

The OSAA restrictions include:

- All equipment in use by student-athletes needs to be sanitized between each use
- Physical contact is absolutely prohibited among the student-athletes, and no sharing of equipment (like footballs) will be allowed.

The idea is to allow student-athletes to take part in workouts that help them stay in shape as they prepare for potential official practices by late summer — and, ideally, a fall sports season.

"So much of what we do right now will dictate whether or not we have some measure of success when it comes to the fall," Gonzales said. "If we could do this right and we can maintain the integrity of the circumstances then we're going to be in good shape."

Though restrictions are in place, for the first time since early March, Baker coaches will be able to monitor their athletes and their progress while maintaining social distancing.

Gonzales understands the increased difficulty that will occur for these coaches as they lead these workouts.

"It's going to be hard, it's going to be difficult and it's going to be time-consuming," Gonzales said. "It's going to have to be something the coaches are going to want to do, it's not their full-time job."

How the future may play out is uncertain, but Gonzales hopes the June 12 reopening can be the first step toward sports returning.

To keep up to date on how high school sports will continue to move forward during the COVID-19 pandemic, go to the OSAA's website and click on the COVID-19 tab on the main page.

New gallery open Friday

White House Art & Design Company will be open from noon to 8 p.m. for the First

Friday art walk on June 5. The new shop, which features a variety of artwork and

repurposed furniture, is at 1829 Main St. and is owned by Be Tiedemann and Patti Burrows.

MISSING

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Kitch said her mother's move was difficult for her siblings, who live in Boise, Seattle and Denver.

"My brother still comes but not as frequently because she can't hold her attention very long any more with the window thing," Kitch said. "If we could go in and sit with her it would be better."

Kitch said her mother often motions for Kitch to go inside, but Kitch tells her there is a sickness and she can't go in to see her.

"We're all getting through it, we all have to do what we can do," Kitch said. "And so we just come and talk through the window, sometimes I'll have a little sign, sometimes I don't. We just do our very best to communicate and they (staff) help a lot. Everybody I think in the world is doing the best they can. We're just all trying to get through it."

Nursing homes continue to work to protect their residents by following the state's guidelines. Staff wear masks and gloves and take residents' temperatures daily.

"We have family that will stand outside the windows and talk to some of the residents," said Robert Whitnah, owner of Memory Lane Homes. "It has been difficult and challenging and my staff has been phenomenal."

Howerton said family members are able to

Facetime with their loved ones, send letters, and some bring signs.

"I feel bad for my residents and my residents' families not being able to see their loved ones," Howerton said.

The staff has added activities, such as making cookies and having pizza days, to try and keep residents' spirits up.

Howerton said they will be having a party for the residents and their families when they are able to open up again to celebrate missed holidays and birthdays during the pandemic.

"I don't want my residents to think that their families don't care," said Howerton.

Suzanne Miller, the administrator at Meadowbrook Place assisted living community, said their residents have been using Zoom to talk with their families, in addition to phone calls.

Relatives have also greeted residents from outside the building.

"We do have one area that we can have outdoor seating as long as they're masked and are social distancing at six feet," Miller said.

Meadowbrook staff encourages residents to go outside on sunny days.

"It's been a very difficult situation as we continue to do the best we can to protect our community," Miller said.

Settler's Park in Baker City is following the guidelines and restrictions set out by the state to keep residents there safe.

TESTS

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Consenting residents and all staff in assisted living facilities that have a dementia care unit must get tested by June 26, according to the Washington Department of Health order.

Right now, Oregon's testing guidelines prioritize a smaller group of workers and residents at long-term care homes—only those exhibiting symptoms—despite federal standards recommending testing everyone regardless of symptoms.

What's known about the state's possible change comes from an email that Fariborz Pakseresht, director of Oregon's Department of Human Services, sent to a woman whose

father lives in a Washington County nursing home. She shared it with The Oregonian/OregonLive.

Pakseresht said he hoped his department and the Oregon Health Authority, the agency leading the state's response to the coronavirus, would have more information to release about the Oregon's plan this week at the latest.

Neither agency would answer specific questions about Pakseresht's email.

About half of the 157 Oregonians who have died of the coronavirus are connected to a senior care home.

According to new federal data based on reports from nursing homes, 55 residents and eight workers at Oregon nursing

homes have died of the coronavirus. It's the first confirmation that a health care worker has died in Oregon, though state officials said they're checking the federal numbers and couldn't immediately explain them.

State statistics show fewer deaths associated with nursing homes—55 deaths—along with 23 deaths associated with assisted living centers and eight deaths associated with retirement homes for 86 deaths overall at senior care homes. State officials do not distinguish between resident deaths and employee deaths.

The federal government has made clear that nursing homes should be treated with the utmost caution as the country reopens.

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