

Pausing sports is just a recommendation

Local schools holding with COVID-19 precautions

By ANNIE FOWLER
Hermiston Herald

Student-athletes have been through a lot the past two years because of the COVID-19 pandemic — from sports being shelved to seasons being altered.

Things might take another turn for the worse as the Oregon Department of Education suggested during its meeting Monday, Jan. 3, that schools and other organizations should pause extracurricular activities or ensure they have the same layered mitigation efforts as during the school day.

The recommendations are advisory only, but the ODE said schools that proceed with extracurricular activities, especially if students don't wear masks, should expect rapid COVID-19 transmission. ODE also said the risk should be clearly explained to families.

"That is a last resort," Oregon School Activities Association Executive Director Pete Weber said of pausing extracurricular activities. "The ultimate goal is to keep schools in in-person schooling. We believe it's critical for them to be able to do their activities."

The Oregon Health Authority and ODE strongly suggest schools strengthen their safety protocols with indoor masking, encourage vaccinations, recommend frequent hand washing and sanitizing and limiting spectators.

COVID-19 cases are up 140% in Oregon, and the Oregon Health Authority on Jan. 6 reported Umatilla County had 306 cases — the highest one-day count since numbers have been tracked.

At the present time, the OSAA does not require COVID-19 testing of student-athletes, and Weber said local school districts have been given the green light to make decisions that they believe work best for their schools and communities.

"They have local control as to what they believe makes sense for them and their communities," Weber said. "At this point, I think everyone is waiting to see what the surge looks like. I was at a conference in California, meeting with people from all 50 states. Some have reached the peaks of their surge and it's on the way out."

In Eastern Oregon, conferences are staying with their current mandates. Intermountain Conference athletic directors discussed the matter during a meeting Jan. 7.

"We just talked about what each school is doing," Pendleton Athletic Director Mike Somnis said. We are staying with what we have been doing. We are asking fans to wear a mask while attending games, we make masks available, and make announcements during games. We are not talking about pausing anything. We are doing a good job within our own conference and we are staying the course."

Hepner AD Greg Grant said the Blue Mountain Conference, which also includes Pilot Rock, Stanfield and Weston-McEwen, is following the mandates set forth by the OHA to provide the safest possible environment for student-athletes.

"That has not changed and will not change," Grant said. "We are sick of reading about this. We want to read stories about real people. Part of my meeting today (in Portland), the report from the sports medicine and aspects committee was how much time they have been spending with student-athletes and



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald, File
Players on the Stanfield bench cheer on their team during the second half of the game Dec. 15, 2021, against the Nixyaawii Golden Eagles at the Nixyaawii Community School in Mission.

mental health. The psychological aspects of school and athletics being a yo-yo. In-person education and athletics are a vital part of maintaining good mental health in our students. We are dedicated to making that happen."

Hermiston High School, which plays in the Mid-Columbia Conference in Washington, follows guidelines set forth by the Washington State Department of Health and the Washington Interscholastic Activities Association, which govern high school athletics and activities.

Hermiston Athletic Director Larry Usher said

a majority of the athletes at the school have been vaccinated, and the school strictly follows the WIAA guidelines, which include COVID-19 testing athletes three times per week, with one test being conducted at least 24 hours before a contest, and whenever possible, the day of the event.

"At this time, it's very important that kids stay connected to our schools and programs," Usher said. "We will continue our current health and safety protocols and move forward as we are."

While Eastern Oregon schools are moving for-

ward, the Portland Public Schools are tightening regulations, requiring athletes to wear masks at all times during sports competitions and practices.

The district also is ending overnight travel for extracurricular activities, shutting down concessions, and will require proof of vaccination or a negative COVID-19 test within 72 hours for anyone over the age of 5 attending an after-school event.

The rules will be in place until at least Feb. 4.

Other school districts, mainly in the Portland area, have taken some of the same measures.

BOARDMAN Chamber of Commerce

PO Box 1 • 101 Olson Rd. • Boardman, OR 97818 • 541-481-3014
www.boardmanchamber.org • email: info@boardmanchamber.org

JAN 19TH, 2022

CHAMBER LUNCHEON

12 PM on Boardman Chamber of Commerce Facebook Page

Like

Email info@boardmanchamber.org if you are unable to view on Facebook and would like a Zoom link

PAINT NIGHT

WITH MICHELLE

At the SAGE Center
101 Olson Rd.
Boardman, OR 97818

JAN. 20 @ 6 PM

Registration required
Visit boardmanchamber.org/events to sign up

2022 DISTINGUISHED CITIZENS AWARDS NOMINATIONS

THE BOARDMAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE IS NOW ACCEPTING NOMINATIONS

for the 2022 Distinguished Citizens Awards Banquet. Let us know which Boardman businesses and community members have made the biggest impact in 2021.

Submit your nominations by January 15, 2022

Scan QR code to complete form or go to bit.ly/3phXqqf

Formulario de nominación disponible en español

If you are a Boardman Chamber member and would like to help sponsor this Chamber newsletter page, call 541-564-4538 or email aworkman@eastoregonian.com

This newsletter proudly sponsored by the following businesses:

www.mtvalleylandco.com

LEE E. DOCKEN Principal Broker

PO Box 50 • 491 NE Columbia Ave • Boardman, OR 97818
Office: 541-481-6251 • Cell 541-571-0062
mtvalleylandco@eotnet.net

Here for you when you need us.

Find out about payment assistance, bill pay options and other programs at www.UmatillaElectric.com.

UMATILLA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
A Truist Energy Company

Boardman Office
400 N.E. Eldridge Drive
Boardman, OR 97818
(541) 481-2220

Community Counseling Solutions

Changing Lives

SERVING

- Morrow
- Wheeler
- Gilliam
- Grant

COUNTIES

541-676-9161 • 541-481-2911
communitycounselingsolutions.org

"We offer a wide variety of behavioral health services"

Three Mile Canyon Farms, LLC
Castle Rock Farming LLC • Columbia River Dairy LLC
Six Mile Land & Cattle LLC

A proud Corporate Citizen of Morrow and Umatilla Counties!

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE!
www.threemilecanyonfarms.com
75906 Threemile Rd • Boardman OR 97818

DINOPAY app + Sinclair Card

Save 30¢ off every gallon.

Get the app today!

FIRST-CLASS SERVICE & LOCAL EXPERTISE

AMERICAN WEST PROPERTIES

DEAN KEGLER
BROKER
dkegler2002@yahoo.com
Oregon Licensed Realtor

2 Marine Dr., Suite #104, BOARDMAN
541-481-2888 • 541-377-6402 CELL