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MSHSAA Board Approves Changes to Summer By-Laws Decision

APRIL 17TH 2020 BY DEE LOFLIN

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MSHSAA Board Approves Changes to Summer By-Laws Decision opens door for possibilities to summer time contests

Columbia, Mo.- The Missouri State High School Activities Association (MSHSAA) Board of Directors voted to grant relief of portions of the MSHSAA By-Laws that include summer limits on contact between coaches and student-athletes, at its April meeting on Thursday, April 16th.

Dependent upon approval from local and state health officials, the MSHSAA Board voted to make the summertime dead period and the summer limits on contact optional for the summer of 2020. MSHSAA By-Law 1.5 requires member schools to establish a period of nine consecutive days beginning on a Saturday and lasting to the second following Sunday, in which no contact takes place between school coaches/directors of MSHSAA-sponsored activities and students enrolled in the member school, or who will be enrolled in the member school during the next school year.

With Thursday's decision, a school may choose to comply with this "dead period" or to allow teams to hold activities. This decision also relieves portions of By-Law 3.15.3 and 3.15.4, which limits teams to 20 days of contact during the summer. Member schools may allow teams to have more than 20 days of contact in which any coaching or instruction in the skills and techniques of any sport takes place.

“The abrupt changes that took place to our normal system of education this spring, have our schools pleading for access to students this summer,” said MSHSAA Executive Director Dr. Kerwin Urhahn. “The membership asked about what possible flexibility and modifications to by-law restrictions that could be offered. If there is no local, state, or national clearance for safe contact with students, then any allowances dealing with summer will be moot. But, in an effort to be prepared for what we hope is possible, this action was taken to grant some relief for the member schools.”

In other action, the Board of Directors voted to allow seniors to be viewed as enrolled students through the summer, which allows them to represent their high schools in summertime interscholastic competition. This relief of By-Law 3.15 is designed for this summer only.

“Hopefully, this will allow schools to play contests against other schools to provide closure and recognition for students and allow teams and kids to play together this summer,” said Urhahn.

At this point, no action was taken to alter any other sections of By-Law 3.15, or the fall no contact period (3.15.1.b) that is scheduled to take place between August 3, 2020 and August 9, 2020. All summertime activities remain optional for students, attendance or participation could not be required.

“The first thing that needs to be clearly understood is that all decisions about anything summer-related – be it contact, access, practice, games, conditioning, etc. - must first be approved, cleared and deemed safe by the CDC, State and Local Health Departments, the Governor, and local Mayors” Urhahn concluded. “The end of social distancing and ‘safe at home’ is still not clearly visible yet, and summer activities may not be possible due to the covid-19 pandemic and its own timeline.”

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