

Breaking down the benefits of the OSSAA's first dead period

By Sam Henderson Stillwater News Press

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It is the time of the year where Earth stands still for nine days.

That is, at least, how it is for high school athletes in the state, as the Oklahoma Secondary Schools Activities Association is in the midst of its first dead period.

There are critics of it out there, but I am all for it.

The new rule started June 29 and goes until Saturday. With the dead period, athletes are not allowed to access school facilities for any sporting activities and cannot be in contact with their coaches.

After talking with other states' high school athletic organizations with similar rules, the OSSAA approved the period in the spring of last year. The passage was met with mixed reaction. Some coaches liked the rule, while others said they felt it hindered their teams' summer schedule.

Regardless, the OSSAA has gone ahead with it, and the test run is upon us.

School gyms and football fields are empty. The dirt on infields is untouched. Competitive swimming pools are placid.

It is almost eerie thinking that no high school sports team will practice in this nine-day span, but I think it is one of the best things the OSSAA has done.

The contest of teams outworking others has gotten out of hand. The belief that being in the weight room one more day than an opponent has driven some teams to crazy schedules. In fact, it has started costing kids their summer.

Don't get me wrong, I am all for summer workouts. I just don't believe it should be every day. There are so many more things to a summer break than making a sport seem like a job.

One of those things is relaxation, which can be a big part of anyone's success. Whether it is hanging out with friends, playing video games or anything of the sort, this dead period allows kids to be kids for nine days. No stress. Just time to clear minds.

I understand there will still be athletes in the state who still go and work out every day during the period. That is great, because it is their choice. I am just thinking of my high school self and what he would want, which would include a few days to sleep until noon. The dead period allows this for some athletes who might have not had that opportunity in previous summers.

On top of this, in the bigger picture, nine lost days of working out will not change much when the sport seasons roll around. It will not win or lose games. It will not change the quality of play.

I applaud the OSSAA for passing and implementing this dead period. It's a step toward realizing that sports are not life and death. I

encourage the OSSAA to look into extending the dead period to two or even three weeks.

While the fields and courts are empty this week, just know that some kids that usually inhabit those areas are making lifelong memories with their friends out and about instead of doing a routine workout.

A reminder like that makes a rule like this worth it.

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