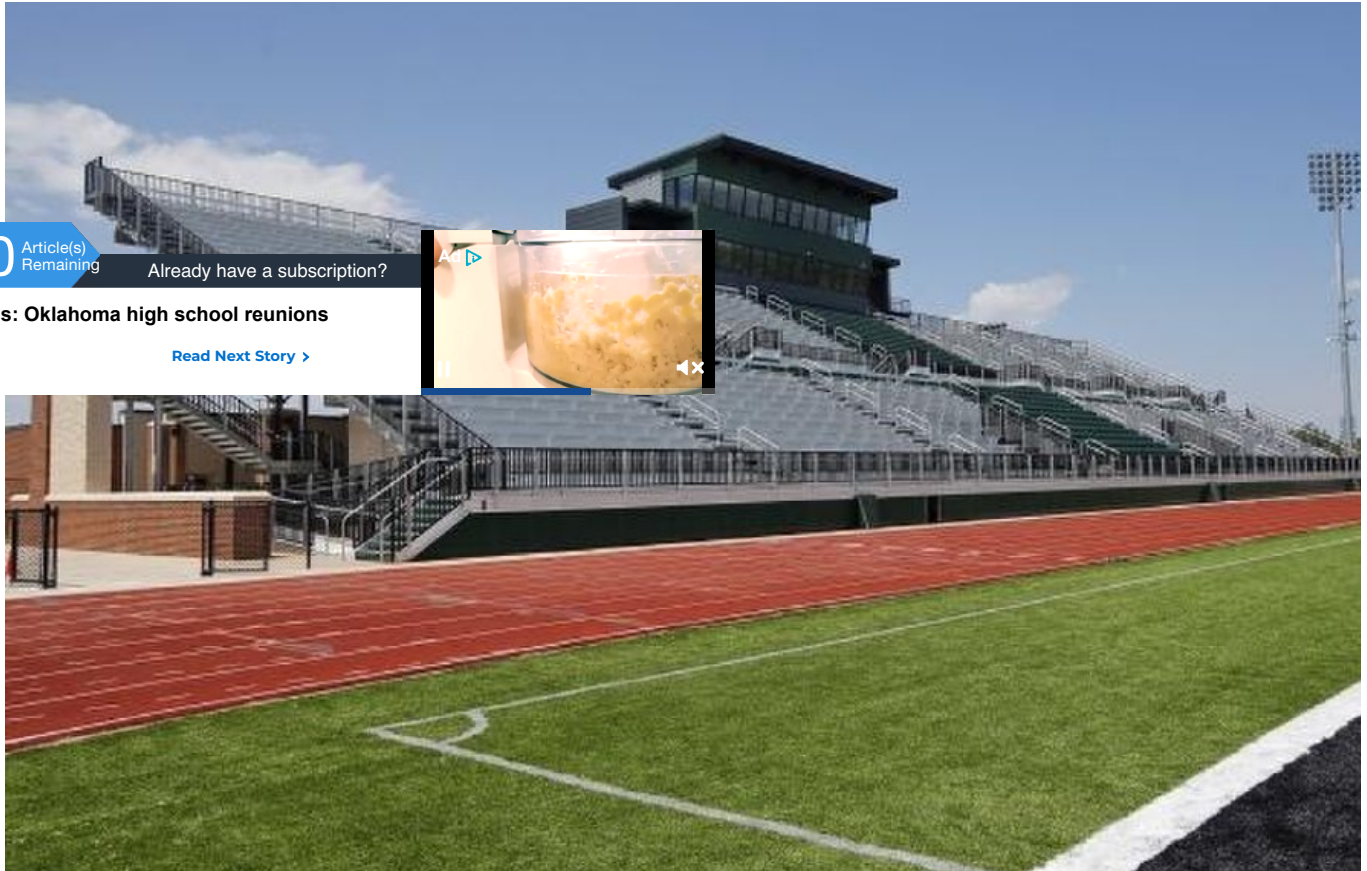


High school sports: New 9-day dead period begins Saturday



by **JACOB UNRUH**

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A look at Edmond Santa Fe's empty football stadium. Starting Saturday, a nine-day dead period begins for all OSSAA-member schools around [Nate Billings/The Oklahoman]

Stillwater football coach Tucker Barnard always made the first week of July free of workouts. He also threw in the first week of June and August.

No early mornings. No weight lifting. No passing. No running.

“I want my kids to feel like they had some summer,” said Barnard, who is also the school’s athletic director.

Now, every high school athlete will get that opportunity for nine free days around the Fourth of July. Starting Saturday, all camp members of the Oklahoma Secondary School Activities Association will be closed to athletic activities as part of a new dead-week period.

It’s the week high school sports stand still.

“Anytime kids can go be with their families, it’s a good thing,” Tuttle football coach Brad Ballard said. “As long as everybody is eq have to do it, I’m great. I know our kids are looking forward to it.”

Under the new OSSAA rule, the dead period will occur during the week of the Fourth of July for a nine-day period. It begins the v before or including the holiday and includes the weekend after.

No facilities in connection with any athletic activity governed by the OSSAA will be in use. Coaches, assistant coaches and sponsc not be allowed contact with students to coach, train or instruct.

Should a violation occur, the coach or sponsor will be suspended from the first half of the regular season in that activity. Even if a coach or sponsor violate the rule, the activity’s head coach will be suspended.

“If everybody’s doing it, I’m fine with it,” Ballard said. “We are not going to do anything on our campus. In fact, all of us are going It’s not going to be a possibility here.”

Some coaches have privately bristled at the rule. One complaint is the timing. Some want to set the nine-day period when they fe best with their schedules.

But the OSSAA balked at that idea from the onset. It would be too hard to police.

The OSSAA spent months working on the policy, even sending surveys to schools three times. The final survey resulted in in a 68 approval rate. The OSSAA board approved the new rule 9-3 in March 2018.

“I think it’s good,” Barnard said. “I think that kids do need a time off.”



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