

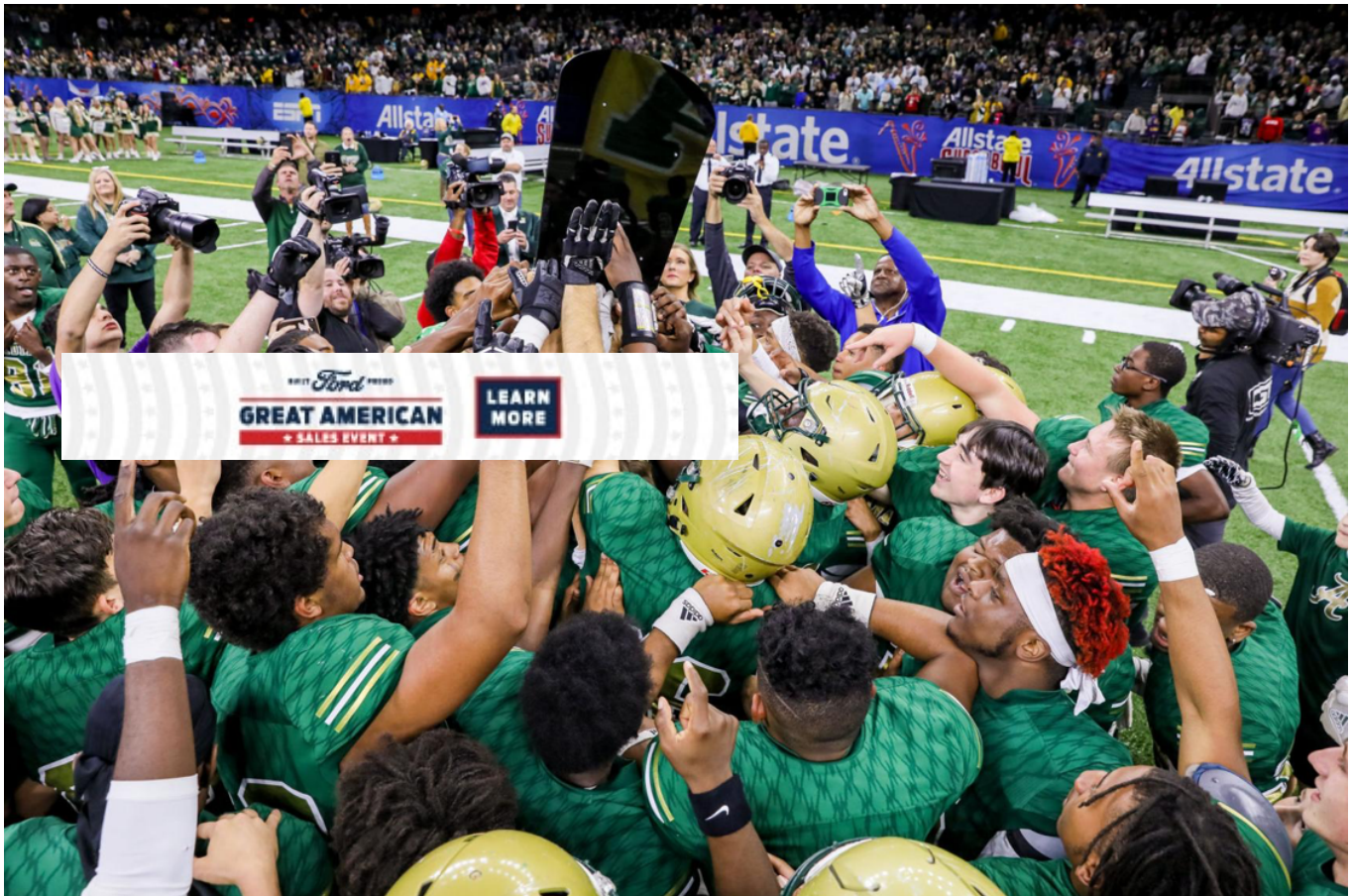
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Flipping fall, spring sports seasons won't happen, LHSAA says: It 'doesn't make sense for us'

BY ROBIN FAMBROUGH | STAFF WRITER

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Acadiana accepts the state championship trophy after defeating Destrehan after the LHSAA Class 5A High School State Championship at Mercedes-Benz Superdome in New Orleans, LA.

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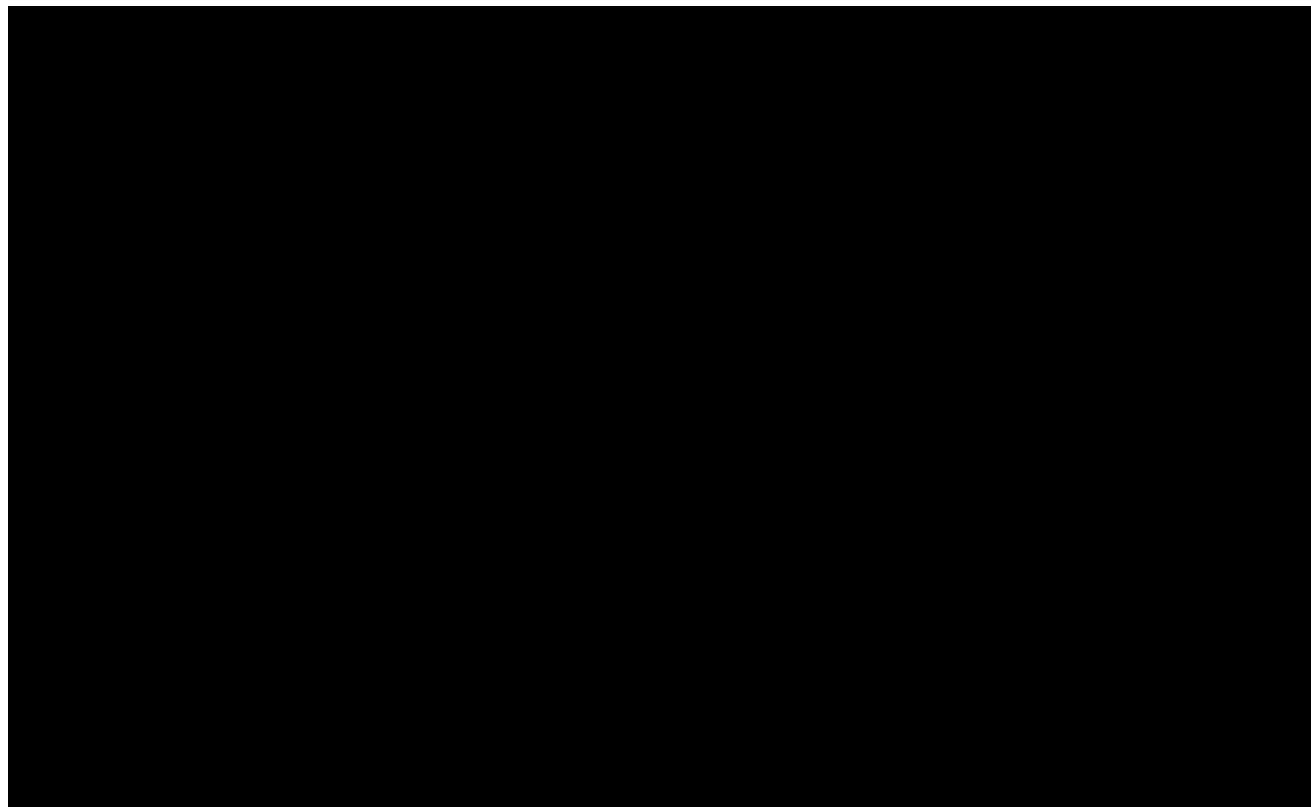
The spread of the coronavirus was not the only thing LHSAA executive director Eddie Bonine was eager to address.

Bonine concluded the LHSAA's summer meeting held Wednesday at the LHSAA office with media interviews that drove home key points about COVID-19 spread and also refuted two growing rumors about the fall seasons.

“Moving football and the other fall sports, flipping fall and spring sports, doesn't make sense for us,” Bonine said. “We've heard from baseball coaches and they don't want it. Some people thought we were going to shut down the fall season today. And that was never considered.

“We discussed several scenarios that could happen. I remain cautiously optimistic about the fall. I said last month that we needed to do the right things in May and June and not hurt our chances to start the fall on time.

Well ... we messed up June and we are still in Phase 2 of (Louisiana's) reopening. We have to get to Phase 3, which allows for contact sports by the end of July to start on time."



The meeting took place on a day when one more parish called to report an athlete tested positive COVID-19. Bonine said schools in approximately 23 of Louisiana's 64 parishes have reported COVID-19 cases as a courtesy, because the LHSAA does not govern summer activities.

While no major policy changes were announced, the executive committee did approve revamping its pre-practice/games health checklist to include asking players about possible contact with a person who tested positive for COVID-19.

Return to practice/play forms for players and coaches who test positive for COVID-19 also will be sent to schools and will require a doctor's signature. Bonine said a letter with additional recommendations for handling COVID-19 situations will also be in the works.

"We believe our schools are doing the right things with sanitation and other measures," Bonine said. "It's just like LSU and the other colleges have found, young people are getting infected because they are going out and socializing in large groups."

The committee bounced ideas off Tulane's Dr. Greg Stewart, the head of the LHSAA's sports medicine advisory board. Stewart said he made a brief presentation and fielded questions, also telling the committee that the motto for 2020 sports should be "Don't be a knucklehead."

"It looks like (LHSAA) will provide some additional guidance for schools. But there is not a whole lot in there that will be new," Stewart said. "If you want to have football and all the sports in the fall, you have to prevent the spread of this virus so we can get to Phase 3 and then Phase 4.

"That means don't go out to that party for an hour or go bowling or do anything with a large group of people. Stay home, wear a mask in public and social distance whenever possible. (Athletes) need to take this seriously."

Of the scenarios and dates discussed, Bonine said he expects more discussions on how to handle COVID-19 positive tests once seasons begin, including those in which a head coach tests positive.

Bonine said he expects the executive committee to meet again via Zoom as the deadline approaches for Gov. John Bel Edwards to make a decision on whether Louisiana will again remain in Phase 2 or move to Phase 3 of reopening later this month.

Lagniappe

Before getting into discussions about COVID-19 and fall sports, the executive committee heard appeals on 10 rulings by Bonine, who said schools would be informed the outcome of the appeal within the next 24 to 48 hours. He said the committee upheld eight of the rulings and subsequent penalties.

Several of the appeals were postponed from April, because of the pandemic. A list of schools appealing was not made public.

- The committee had a philosophical discussion on one major academic point. Committee members agreed that students should attend classes in person in order to be eligible to compete for school sports teams, likely nixing the idea that a student-athlete could opt for school-based home learning. The discussion yielded no formal opinion.



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