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# Breaking down the PIAA's sport-specific 'Return to Competition' guidelines

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Under the approved set of guidelines from the PIAA, it's recommended that cross country race officials stagger start times and, if possible, widen course routes to promote social distancing. Vicki Vellios Briner | Special to PennLive Vicki Vellios Briner | Special to PennLive

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By **[Eric F. Epler | eepler@pennlive.com](mailto:eepler@pennlive.com)**

The PIAA Board of Directors on Wednesday approved its 'Return to Competition' guidelines for all fall sports.

The state's governing sports body, using current Pa. Dept. of Health and CDC guidelines, as well as recommendations from multiple in-house committees, issued its sport-specific considerations in a 24-page

document.

Below is a breakdown of some notable guidelines in each sport. Fall practice begins Aug. 17.

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## Cross Country

- Cross country meets should consider using staggered, wave or interval starts. A maximum of 12 participants from each team, while participating in an event with four or fewer teams, is recommended.
- Consider widening the course to at least six feet at its narrowest point.
- The use of team tents on site is discouraged. Teams are encouraged to provide individual water for their athletes and discourage the use of water stations and open cups.
- Host officials are encouraged to consider using image-based equipment at the finish line to assist with picking place and reducing congestion.

## Field Hockey

- Suspend handshakes prior to and following the pregame conference, which is now recommended to take place at midfield with social

which is now recommended to take place at midfield with social distancing. Teams should limit pregame conference to the head coach and a single captain.

- When possible, additional game balls may be placed around the outside of the field to limit contact with the ball.
- The officials' table be limited to essential personnel, which includes home team scorer and timer with a recommended distance of six feet. Visiting team personnel should find alternate location.
- If a team member is carded, it's recommended to designate a location where the player is to stand and remain socially distant from officials' table.
- No pregame introduction lines.

## **Football**

- To promote social distancing, the team box may be extended on both sides of the field to the 10-yard line for players only.
- Teams should reduce game-day rosters to allow for more social distancing on the sidelines.
- Players should not share uniforms, towels or other apparel and equipment.
- The ball should be cleaned and sanitized throughout the contest as recommended by the manufacturer. Ball holders should maintain social distancing and wear gloves.
- Cloth face coverings are permitted. Clear face shields on helmets, previously prohibited, are allowed and the PIAA is promoting use by players.

- A single charged timeout may be extended to a maximum of two minutes to allow more time for players to hydrate.
- Encourage the minimization of offensive and defensive huddles and encourage coaching staffs to utilize alternate methods of communication, such as hand signals, cards or signs.
- Chain crew must wear face coverings.

## **Golf**

- Schools may adhere to local golf course competition rules in relation to COVID-19.
- Social distancing of at least six feet should be maintained at all times. No hugging, shaking hands or fist bumps.
- Limit use of the golf shop and retail spaces. Field size should be limited, and a one-tee per group only policy is recommended. Start times can be altered.
- Tees, pencils and ball markers and sharpies will not be available. Players must bring their own equipment and food/beverage as needed.
- To limit congestion, it's recommended that window of time be established for players access practice facilities prior to their round. Practice facilities should not be used after the round.

## **Soccer**

- Limit pregame conference to head referee, head coaches and a single captain from each team.
- When possible, additional game balls may be placed around the outside of the field to limit contact with the ball.
- Encourage bench personnel to observe social distancing of six feet

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- No pregame world cup introduction line or pre-half team huddles on the field.

## **Tennis**

- Between points, players should use their racquet or foot to advance the tennis balls back to opponents. In addition, avoid using hands when returning balls to another court.

- Avoid touching your face after handling a ball, racquet or other equipment.

- When playing doubles, coordinate with your partner to maintain physical distancing where possible.

## **Volleyball**

- Suspend roster submission at the pre-match conference. Rosters should be submitted directly to the officials' table before the 10-minute mark.

- Team areas may be expanded to promote social distancing outside of playable areas.

- Suspend the protocol of teams switching sides/benches between sets. Home team should select their bench prior to the match and remain on the same side for the duration of the match.

## **Water Polo**

- Teams should be seated on opposite sides of the pool and away from the officials' table.

- To promote social distancing, substitute players may be in the water behind the goal line outside the re-entry area, at least two meters from the goal.

- The use of goal judges is optional. The game timer can also act as shot clock timer.
- Require athletes to arrive at the venue already in competitive attire or provide alternative accommodations for participants to change that allows for six feet of social distancing.

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