



WVSSAC announces restrictions on cheerleading, leaving some upset

by MEGAN BSHARAH
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The WVSSAC released new guidelines for fall cheerleading including no stunts, mandatory masks and social distancing. (WCHS/WVAH File)

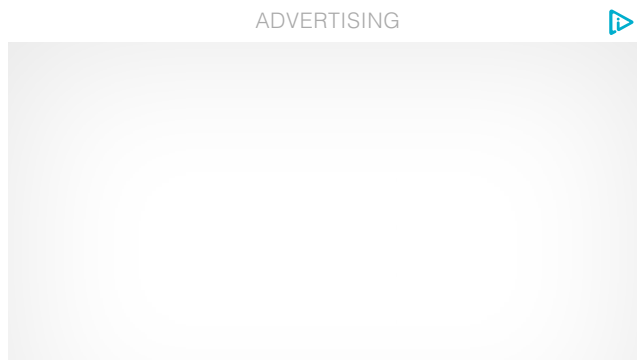


CHARLESTON, W.Va. (WCHS/WVAH) —

Recently, the West Virginia Secondary School Activities Commission released new guidelines for a few fall sports like volleyball, soccer and cheerleading, but some people think the changes made to cheerleading are unfair.



Matewan High School cheer coach Kimberly Smith said she was shocked when she saw the WVSSAC announcement that cheer squads would not be allowed to perform stunts this season.



"Stunting, jumps and tumbling, that is cheer," Smith said. "If you take something away from it, that's the same as any other sport. If you take part of their equipment away from it, how are they going to play the sport?"

Each sport has a different set of guidelines. Athletes in outdoor sports like football and soccer don't have to wear masks while playing, but athletes for indoor sports like volleyball and cheerleading do.

WVSSAC Executive Director Bernie Dolan said the decisions were made to keep

students safe and healthy.

"You got a mask on. If it moves, you're supposed to catch people," Dolan said. "And so, we think that's unrealistic and not safe."

While Smith said the restrictions are unfair to cheerleaders, Dolan said many high school athletes have been in similar situations for months.

"I think it does hurt some people," Dolan said. "Some people are bases. Some people are flyers, and that's what they've geared everything to. But it wasn't fair to our spring sports that got eliminated completely. It wasn't fair to the basketball teams who didn't get their season. Nothing is fair in this COVID situation."

Instead of the typical scoring system at cheer competitions, this year cheer squads will earn extra points for jumps, dancing and tumbling, and they'll lose 10 points for partner stunts and pyramid formations.

"It's putting a big disadvantage to a lot of schools where they think it's putting it on an even playing field," Smith said.

Smith said she's seen several college and All-Star cheer squads performing stunts while wearing masks, and she hopes the WVSSAC will rethink its decision.

"I just hope that whatever the outcome is, the cheerleaders across the state of West Virginia can get their stunting back," Smith said.



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