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IHSA approves a plan for winter sports — except for basketball — to begin and allows contact days for fall, spring and summer sports

By **STAFF REPORTS**
DAILY SOUTHTOWN
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Waubonsie Valley's Brian Knothe swims in the 100-yard breaststroke at the state meet in Evanston on Saturday, Feb. 29, 2020. (Michael Schmidt / Pioneer Press)

Winter sports will be on their way.

By an email vote, the Illinois High School Association board approved a plan Tuesday that allows winter sports, with the exception of boys and girls basketball, to be played seven practice days after the first practice.

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Badminton, boys swimming, boys and girls bowling, and girls gymnastics are all lower-risk sports.

The acclimation period was developed by the IHSA's sports medicine advisory committee.



The Illinois Department of Public Health moved Chicago and most of the suburbs Monday into Tier 2, which allows competition.

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Will and Kankakee counties, however, are still in Tier 3. That means high schools like Lincoln-Way East, Lincoln-Way Central, Lincoln-Way West, Lockport, Lemont, Providence and Joliet Catholic will not be able to practice or compete until reaching the next level.

The IHSA also approved contact days for all fall, spring and summer sports, beginning Jan. 25.

The IHSA, which has a meeting set for Jan. 27 to provide further details on seasons and scheduling, conducted a Zoom meeting Tuesday with athletic directors.

Andrew boys bowling coach Mark Lobes has high hopes for this season, even in an abbreviated form. The program has won three state championships with a runner-up finish in the past 10 seasons.

“I’m so excited to see the season start,” Lobes said. “We selected our team the day before everything was shut down in November. We’ve been waiting 60 days. It’s going to be a short, tight season, but we’re going to make the most of it.”

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The winter season originally was scheduled to run from Nov. 16 to Feb. 13, followed by the spring season Feb. 15 to May 1 and the summer season from April 19 to June 26.

Marmion athletic director Paul Chabura said the boys swimming team is ready to make waves.

“We’re going to start up (Wednesday) with boys swimming, just start getting back in the pool,” he said. “Some of the kids have been working on their own at

YMCAs or whatever pool was available to them. Wednesday will be the first time we've had anyone swimming in our pool since Nov. 20.

“Hopefully, we'll get more information as far as when the season starts and ends so we can work on the schedule.”

Besides contact days, schools in Phase 4, Tier 1, and Tier 2 can conduct weight training with masks and social distancing. Schools in Tier 3 remain limited to one-on-one training with a coach and student-athlete.

The Amateur Hockey Association Illinois also announced Tuesday the cancellation of its state tournaments across all levels and divisions for the 2021 season, citing COVID-19 restrictions. The tournaments were scheduled to begin in February and extend into early March.

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