

# **IHSAA says 40% capacity can't be maintained at state tournaments; wrestlers can bring two fans each**

The IHSAA can't allow 40% capacity at this season's winter state tournaments.

That's the word from the association, which announced via memo Friday morning that because many schools in the state maintain a remote or hybrid learning model, its host schools don't feel comfortable allowing 40% capacity at their state tournament games.

The IHSAA also pointed out that Gov. Brad Little's 40% capacity order comes with the stipulation that social distancing must be maintained, which is not possible at its host sites.

For that reason, if the IHSAA were to agree to 40% capacity, it would lose its basketball and wrestling state tournament sites.

"We must be respectful of our host sites/schools and hold our events under collaborative guidelines," wrote the IHSAA, which also said if it moved tournaments to other venues in the state, some schools would opt out due to lack of COVID-19 restrictions in place.

The good news for wrestling fans is that the IHSAA will be able to host a complete bracket of wrestlers — with two fans per wrestler. If that seems to suggest wrestling attendance will be less than that of basketball, it shouldn't. The IHSAA said that the large number of wrestlers combined with essential personnel will equal out to about the same number of people allowed in for basketball tournaments.

It's also worth noting that the Ford Idaho Center — whose spectator limit is 1800 per game, 900 a team — has a hand in determining attendance numbers, meaning this decision was not entirely IHSAA's.

"The responsibility of hosting schools and communities for a state event, from the vastly diverse corners of Idaho, is a challenge," the IHSAA wrote. "This has been a difficult school year for all Idaho students. We will continue to focus on the priority the steering committees set forth – do whatever it takes give Idaho students an opportunity to play in a state tournament."

The full memo from the IHSAA is below:

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## IDAHO HIGH SCHOOL ACTIVITIES ASSOCIATION

Serving Idaho's Youth Since 1926

Ty Jones, Executive Director

Julie Hammons, Assistant Director      Mike Federico, Assistant Director  
8011 Ustick Road      Boise, ID 83704

Phone #: (208) 375-7027      Fax #: (208) 322-5505

website: idhsaa.org      e-mail: admin@idhsaa.org

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2/5/2021

TO: Member Schools  
FROM: IHSAA  
RE: Winter State Tournament Protocol

We know many of you have been fielding questions about the current attendance restrictions for IHSAA State Tournaments. This memo is to further explain how and why the IHSAA implemented these guidelines and hopefully help you answer questions from your coaches, students, parents and community.

When COVID-19 pandemic hit last spring, IHSAA spring sports and activities were completely cancelled. That was a heartbreaking decision by our office and Board of Directors that affected thousands of Idaho students, coaches, administrators, families and communities. As we entered the 20-21 school year, this was something we did not want to see repeated. So, beginning this summer, the IHSAA put together COVID steering committees for each fall and winter sport comprised of coaches, AD's, principals and superintendents. These committees unanimously voted to do whatever it took to allow students to participate, even if that meant no fans in the stands. Thankfully, we've been able to do that so far. Our focus is, and always will be, the safety of the students, and to represent the schools of Idaho in a responsible manner.

Flash forward to our current situation concerning our winter sports tournaments. Thankfully, some of the restrictions are being relaxed and schools are beginning to discuss moving back to fulltime, in-person instruction. That has not been the current practice in many parts of the state. Because of that, our host schools have a very hard time making the decision to pack their gym to 40% capacity but still have remote or hybrid learning models for their students. We would also point out that the Governor's order of allowing 40% capacity is only applicable if social distancing can still be maintained. In many of our host sites, that is not possible. We must be respectful of our host sites/schools and hold our events under collaborative guidelines.

If the IHSAA agrees to move to 40% capacity, we will lose our basketball and wrestling sites. If we move venues to other areas of the state, we have schools who would not attend due to the lack of COVID restrictions in place.

With the ability to host the 2021 State Wrestling Tournament at the Ford Idaho Center, we will be able to have a complete bracket of wrestlers while allowing two fans per participant. As with any wrestling tournament, the number of participants and essential personnel required in this unique sport will subtract from the overall percentage of people in a venue.

Greg Woods is a sports reporter at the Post Register. Reach him [208-](tel:208-208-2082)

[542-6772](#) and follow him on Twitter at GregWWoods.