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SEC's Sankey: No Football Rescheduling Due to COVID (/athlete-safety/sec-s-sankey-no-football-rescheduling-due-to-covid.html)



by Paul Steinbach (/featured-ab-writers/paul-steinbach.html)

📅 July 2021

Southeastern Conference commissioner Greg Sankey made clear during his opening statement at SEC Football Media Days what is expected of member football programs this season — namely, they should take every step to ensure student-athlete health, because games will not be rescheduled due COVID outbreaks.

Unlike last year, the SEC has not built open weeks into the back of its 2021 schedule to accommodate disruption. And with six weeks remaining before the season kicks off, the time for players to seek full vaccination is now, Sankey said.

"Let me be clear to our fans, to our coaches, to our staff members, and to our student-athletes: COVID-19 vaccines are widely available," Sankey said, as reported by *Sports Illustrated* (<https://www.si.com/college/alabama/bamacentral/sec-commissioner-greg-sankey-addresses-covid-19-nil-legislation-blackwell>). "They've proven to be highly effective. And when people are fully vaccinated, we all have the ability to avoid serious health risks, reduce the virus' spread, and maximize our chances of returning to a normal college football experience and to normal life."

Without naming teams, Sankey said six of the conference's 14 football programs have reached the 80-percent vaccination threshold. Those teams no longer have to be subjected to frequent testing and mask mandates. He hopes the others follow that lead.

"With six weeks to go before kickoff, now is the time to seek that full vaccination," Sankey said. "And we know nothing is perfect, but the availability and the efficacy of the COVID-19 vaccines are an important and incredible product of science. It's not a political football, and we need to do our part to support a healthy society because, as we look back, the potential absence of college sports last year caused us to think about not losing sight of the lifelong experiences, the laboratory of learning that takes place, and the educational benefits that accrue to the people who participate on our teams."

Sankey added that he wishes to remove roster requirements for teams that exhibit positive cases. However, that would mean that teams would have to outright forfeit games — a fact that could impact playoff aspirations.

"So let's just indicate like the realities we deal with," Sankey said. "You hope not to have disruption, but 'hope is not a plan' is the great cliché. We still have roster minimums that exist, just like last year. What I've identified for consideration among our membership is we remove those roster minimums and you're expected to play as scheduled. That means your team needs to be healthy to compete, and if not, that game won't be rescheduled.

"Our teams are going to have to be fully prepared to play their season as scheduled, which is why embedded in my remarks is the vaccination motivation."

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Paul Steinbach

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writers/paul-steinbach.html) is Senior Editor of *Athletic Business*.



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NCAA Updates COVID-19 Guidance for Fall Sports ([/athlete-safety/ncaa-updates-covid-19-guidance-for-fall-sports.html](#))

The NCAA on Wednesday released new guidance for fall training and competition amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

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NYC Soon To Require Vaccination For Gyms, More ([/athlete-safety/nyc-soon-to-require-vaccination-for-indoor-fitness-facilities-more.html](#))

New York City mayor Bill de Blasio announced Tuesday (<https://www1.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/539-21/transcript-mayor-de-blasio-holds-media-availability>) a new approach to thwarting the spread of the coronavirus that will require proof of vaccination in order to take part in indoor activities like dining at a restaurant, seeing a performance or going to the gym.

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Tokyo COVID-19 Infections Surge as Games Come to End ([/athlete-safety/tokyo-covid-19-infections-surge-as-games-come-to-end.html](#))

Japanese officials warned on Wednesday that COVID-19 infections were surging at an unprecedented pace, but also insisted there was no connection to Tokyo playing host to the Olympic Games.

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NFL Coach Bemoans Team's Low Vaccination Rate ([/athlete-safety/nfl-coach-bemoans-team-s-low-vaccination-rate.html](#))

Ron Rivera, head coach of the NFL's Washington Football Team, said he's "beyond frustrated" with his team's low vaccination rate.

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Washington State Coach Rolovich Refuses Vaccine ([/athlete-safety/washington-state-coach-rolovich-refuses-vaccine.html](#))

Washington State head football coach Nick Rolovich said Tuesday that he is disappointed his decision to not get the COVID-19 vaccine has caused a distraction for his team.

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NFL: Team COVID Outbreaks Will Result in Forfeits (/athlete-safety/nfl-team-covid-outbreaks-will-result-in-forfeits.html)

In a memo to all 32 teams Thursday, the National Football League announced that games canceled due to a team's COVID issues will not be rescheduled and treated as forfeits.

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Toyota Pulls Ads as COVID Delivers More Olympic Blows (/athlete-safety/covid-delivers-more-blows-to-olympics.html)

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