



To: NJSIAA Member Schools
From: NJSIAA Sports Advisory Task Force
Date: July 10, 2020
RE: Return-to-Play Update

The NJSIAA Sports Advisory Task Force is pleased to announce its current plan for the fall sports season – “Model 1 – Delayed Fall Season.” However, the Task Force is devising multiple contingency models should there be a need to pivot as school-related and health-related circumstances evolve.

NJSIAA will continue to monitor health-related circumstances throughout the summer and will continue communicating with the Department of Education on a regular basis. NJSIAA will also continue to track the Governor’s directives regarding sports activities and will consult with the necessary governmental agencies. If there is a change in the Governor’s Road Back, Restart and Recovery Plan for Education regarding in-person schooling in the fall, the NJSIAA will be equipped with contingency plans.

At this point, NJSIAA is prepared to proceed with Model 1 – Delayed Fall Season, as outlined below. This plan is designed to give school administrators time to safely reopen schools and to begin planning for a fall sports season. We all recognize the fluidity of the COVID-19 pandemic and realize that conditions are changing regularly. We will continue to provide updates on all potential plans as timely as possible to ensure schools, leagues and conferences have time to adapt. Any decision to move away from Model 1 – Delayed Fall Season will be made no later than the end of the summer recess period, August 28th.

Sports Advisory Task Force Guiding Principles:

The members of the Sports Advisory Task Force believe that participation in athletics enhances the educational experience of all students. The principles below serve to help guide committee members in their decision-making process.

1. Ensure the health and safety of all student-athletes.
2. Re-engage all student-athletes as soon as possible for their social, emotional and mental well-being.
3. Maximize participation across all sports and all student-athletes.
4. Keep competition as local as possible for as long as possible.
5. Develop multiple return-to-play models to minimize the risk of a cancelled season.
6. Maintain the ability to pivot to back-up plans when deemed necessary.
7. Minimize potential impact on the spring season.
8. Minimize the importance of post-season, state-wide championships.

Summer Recess Period:

The NJSIAA summer recess period will run from Monday, July 13th, through Friday, August 28th. Participation in the summer recess period is optional and districts may choose which date to start. Summer recess workouts will run according to the guidelines issued by NJSIAA and the Medical Advisory Task Force. All schools participating in the summer recess workouts must start with the Phase 1 guidelines regardless of their start date. Please refer to the NJSIAA website for further information on these guidelines for the summer recess period: <https://www.njsiaa.org/>.

The Medical Advisory Task Force guidelines are only applicable to the summer recess period. Once regular season practices commence on September 14th, all practices will be run in accordance with local school district policies. The Medical Advisory Task Force guidelines are consistent with research-based best practices used throughout the country at all levels of competition including both the professional and collegiate levels.

Model 1 – Delayed Fall Season:

Sport	Practice Date	Regular Season Start	Regular Season Finish	Post-Season Dates
G Tennis	Sept. 14 th	Sep. 28 th	Oct. 23 rd	Oct. 26 th – Oct. 31 st
Football	Sept. 14 th	Oct. 2 nd	Nov. 7 th	Nov. 13 th – Nov. 22 nd
All other sports	Sept. 14 th	Oct. 1 st	Nov. 12 th	Nov. 13 th – Nov. 22 nd

Model 1 Rationale:

The Task Force recognizes that returning to school is the main priority and that all student-athletes should acclimate to the classroom before they begin their fall sports season. By delaying the start of practices until after the school year begins, schools will have the opportunity to open their buildings and work through the logistics of their modified school day before extra-curricular activities start. By reducing the length of the season, student-athletes will not only have the opportunity for participation but will have more time to focus on their academic requirements. Leagues and conferences have the ability to amend their schedules for regular season competitions with a focus on keeping athletics local. There is no model that eliminates all risks, but a reduced season will naturally lead to a reduced amount of competition, which minimizes the risk of infection or spread by exposure to many different teams and schools.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected every school district differently. This fall season will focus on providing athletic opportunity, engagement and participation – not winning championships. In order to focus on the Restart of School and to level the playing field athletically, there will be no state-wide, post-season competition under this delayed start model.

Virtual Contact Period:

From Saturday, August 29th, through Sunday, September 13th, **FALL** coaches only may have virtual contact with their student-athletes. Therefore, there may be no in-person practices, scrimmages or games during this time.

Scrimmages:

Schools will have the opportunity to participate in one pre-season scrimmage with a neighboring school. The scrimmage may occur any time within seven days of the regular season start date for that sport. When possible, schools are encouraged to participate in intra-squad scrimmages and utilize officials to provide additional preseason preparation.

Post-Season:

The NJSIAA will strive to open post-season participation to any school wishing to participate. However, there will be no singles or doubles tournament in girl's tennis.

Seeding committees will be convened for each sport in order to reduce the reliance on power points and other ranking systems. Objective data may be reviewed by the seeding committee, but it will also consider school location and other criteria.

Thanksgiving football games will be permissible after Sunday, November 22nd, at each school's discretion. Otherwise, no other fall sports competition will be allowed after this date.

Out of State Competition:

Any of out of state competition must be approved by the NJSIAA. Please submit a request to the NJSIAA Assistant Director in charge of the sport at least 2-weeks prior to the competition date. Also, League & Conference approval must be solicited and noted in the request to the NJSIAA.

Transfers:

Any student-athlete that is subject to a transfer sit-period will be eligible for participation on Thursday, October 15th. This eligibility date is applicable to every fall sport.

Sports Advisory Task Force Members:

Dave Frazier, Rutherford HS, Chair and NFHS Board of Directors
Tom Mullahey, Clifton HS, Executive Committee 1st Vice-President
Denis Nelson, River Dell HS
Kevin Murphy, Washington Township HS
Ryan Miller, Scotch Plains-Fanwood HS
Todd Ricker, Parsippany Hills HS
Dan Uszaki, Northern Burlington Regional HS
Vito Chiaravalloti, Christian Brothers Academy