



The Big 8 Conference supports the fact that education based athletics is a privilege, not a right, which requires an added level of responsibility for those that administer them and serve as a partner in the education of student-athletes.

When school delivery methods for the fall of 2020 are determined and the WIAA confirms season regulations and start dates, decisions related to athletics and extra-curriculars will be released by schools as well as the specific plans to support student athletes and programs.

We will continue to get regular updates and guidance from local Public Health officials, DPI, and the Wisconsin Department of Health Services and communicate with the WIAA to make sure the correct information is released as soon as possible. The next update of timelines and information related to the status of Big 8 athletics can be expected following the regular Big 8 meeting August 17th.

As with the past spring season and during the summer contact period, when school facilities are closed in each district, we will not hold in-person practices or workouts, or allow practice without a coach. As each district allows, to put the physical and mental well-being of our student-athletes at the forefront we will offer sport-specific virtual coaching and workouts provided they do not require student-athletes and coaches to gather or encourage student-athletes to group together. In-person practices and workouts may be allowed to occur in parallel to the instruction model adopted by member schools and following public health recommendations.

Since all member schools are not able to participate fully in conference contests during current fall season dates as scheduled, Big 8 Conference competitions will not be held and conference champions will not be named. **Passed 10-0**

All schools will be supported in their local decisions and may have the option to schedule non-conference competitions in any fall sports, so long as they follow the guidance of the WIAA and local public health officials.

Please contact your school's athletic director for school-specific information and timelines. Decisions regarding remaining sports during the school year will be made in a similar fashion.

Additional information:

The next Big 8 meeting will be on August 17th. In the interim the group of schools who have moved virtual will collaborate on best practices for virtual coaching opportunities and provide ways to engage students by providing mental, emotional, and fitness support in a robust manner through distance learning opportunities. The group will also advocate for additional access once in-person school and athletics return by proposing flexible coach contact regulations during the school year of 2020-21. Finally, in the immediate future will provide feedback to the WIAA on alternate calendars being considered in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Fall sports coaches may continue to provide individual virtual instruction during established season dates for student-athletes (via GoogleClassroom, Hudl, Zoom, or other shared online spaces) to those student-athletes that have completed all eligibility requirements with training, conditioning and skill development until the end of the respective fall sports season, which is the final day of the scheduled 2020 State Tournament for the respective sport. **Virtual coaching guidelines may vary by district, so make sure to confirm and abide by your specific district's guidelines and restrictions for live virtual coaching.**

For out-of-season sports, as with any "normal" offseason, programs for **individual training** or workouts may be shared - such as stretching, flexibility, and warm-up routines, strength and speed training, conditioning, and mental preparation/sport psychology resources - so long as it follows normal WIAA Coaching Contact rules. This clarifies that coaching instruction is not allowed for non-fall sports for schools in the virtual learning model but connections to see how they are doing and supporting the academic needs of students through monitoring and advocacy are encouraged.

Previously shared - Open letter to school communities from the Big 8 conference

Please help us in guiding our student-athletes, coaches, and families through a terribly difficult situation and circumstance. We are going to need your help looking for signs that people need help. We have [resources to share for mental health](#) and support. It is likely many of our players, coaches, and families will be feeling anxiety, hopelessness, depression, sadness, anger, and many other feelings. If it gets bad please don't hesitate to ask for help or school supports. This is exceptionally difficult and responses will vary for all students but will especially hit the athletes significantly as they have a great connection to each other and will undoubtedly be missing the camaraderie and shared experience and expectations that accompany school-based sports, celebrations, and anticipated experiences. We will be moving forward and continue to try and give them the best experience possible in this difficult and unique time. The "normal" season may be over, but we don't plan on stopping, connecting, and supporting until we can be back together to play again.