

# Interscholastic Athletic Contingency Season Options

The following is a comprehensive competition plan that would allow for member schools to officially start the interscholastic athletic fall season for high school sports within the defined timeframes.

## Background

The Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSSAA), on July 7, 2020, released a [Roadmap for the Return of Interscholastic Athletics](#) to guide local school systems (LSS) decisions as they determine the extent of student participation, even in a virtual school setting. Within that document, the MPSSAA states, *“The MPSSAA will issue additional detailed guidance periodically, as deemed necessary by the state’s movement toward phase three and schools operating under a new modified sense of normalcy.”*

On August 3, 2020, the MPSSAA at the request of the Public School Superintendent Association of Maryland (PSSAM), postponed the competition season for fall and winter sports and began working on a Two-Semester Plan, released on September 11, 2020.

The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) on September 1, 2020, reissued the June 12 order stating, *“High school and college athletics may resume sports gatherings and events, but may not open to spectators or the general public. For contact sports (e.g., wrestling, basketball, and football), play should be modified to safely increase distance between players following [CDC guidance](#).”*

Maryland is currently the most restrictive state in the country as it relates to the restarting of high school sports. With a February 22, 2021, first competition date, many states will have played their fall and winter sport seasons, while any states delaying fall sports would have restarted in December or January. Maryland is currently one of only seven states to have no fall competition.

## Rationale

The State Board of Education, the State Superintendent, and the MPSSAA believes it is crucial not only to the physical, emotional, and mental well-being of our high school students across the state to return to physical activity and athletic competition, as well as for attaining a high level of academic engagement. In doing so, the MPSSAA is committed to providing as much of the traditional experience as possible for students, without sacrificing the safety and well-being of students and staff through participation opportunities.

Given the position of the MDH that high school sports may resume and the guidance issued by the MPSSAA that would allow for high school participation to resume in Stage Three of the Governor's Recovery Plan, the following plan allow LSS to begin the official start of the interscholastic fall sports season for student-athletes.

## Student and School Outcomes

Interscholastic athletics and activities, as modified here, benefit the physical and social-emotional well-being of participants and their communities. These programs instill a sense of pride in school and community, teach lifelong lessons such as group dynamics,

overcoming adversity, teamwork, self-discipline, and facilitate the physical and emotional development of our state's high school students.

Allowing extracurricular participation while students are in virtual learning does not place athletics or activities over education, rather it portrays the LSS commitment to strengthening the culture of the school, promoting the physical and mental health of students, and promotes these programs as valuable extended learning opportunities for students.

The recent [University of Wisconsin of Health and Wisconsin School of Medicine study](#), completed by a team of physicians, child health experts and researchers, found that approximately 68 percent of the 3,243 student-athletes surveyed reported feelings of anxiety and depression at levels that would typically require medical intervention, an increase of 37 percent from past research studies.

High school sports and activities are equitable in providing opportunities for all students and not only those with the social economic capabilities to participate. Students strive based on the mentorship and comradery of coaches and teammates and develop daily structure. These programs continue to be a tremendous benefit to reaching many at-risk students.

Allowing high school fall sports also provides opportunities to engage groups of students, test transportation policies, and implement in-person policies and procedures as schools prepare to bring more students back into classrooms.

Seasons are short and there are time limitations. A fall sports season will mitigate issues and challenges of the condensed Two-Semester Plan that includes:

- Two-week overlap between sport seasons;
- Coaches who coach multiple sports;
- Students who drop from teams to start their next sport season;
- Overuse injuries of students playing maximum games within shortened back-to-back athletic seasons;
- Facility concerns on school campuses, including the availability of fields with fall and winter overlapping;
- Roster concerns, especially for smaller schools;
- Appropriate preseason preparation for a shorter season, such as pitchers in baseball and softball;
- Availability of facilities, such as parks and recreation and other private facilities that are traditionally used during the operation of interscholastic athletics (indoor track facilities, tennis courts, swimming pools, golf courses, etc.);
- Providing Spring Sport Athletes with a potential full season after the cancellation of the season last year.

## Local School System Options

Each LSS may decide to begin the sport seasons based on the calendar below or choose to participate in the MPSSAA Two-Semester Plan.

## Local School System Options

Date	October 7 Option	2nd Semester Plan Option
<b>Fall Sports</b> Cross Country Field Hockey Football Golf Soccer Volleyball	<b>First Available Practice Date:</b> October 7, 2020 <b>First Available Competition Date:</b> October 27, 2020 (Golf October 7, 2020) <b>Last Play Date:</b> December 12, 2020 <b>Available Competition Weeks:</b> 7 Weeks <b>Culminating Event/Tournament:</b> December 14 - 19, 2020	<b>First Available Practice Date:</b> March 15, 2021 <b>First Available Competition Date:</b> April 5, 2021 <b>Last Play Date:</b> May 8, 2021 <b>Available Competition Weeks:</b> 5 Weeks
<b>Winter Sports</b> Basketball Swimming and Diving Indoor Track Wrestling	<b>First Available Practice Date:</b> December 14, 2020 <b>First Available Competition Date:</b> January 4, 2021 <b>Last Play Date:</b> February 27, 2021 <b>Available Competition Weeks:</b> 8 Weeks <b>Culminating Event/Tournament:</b> March 1 - 13, 2021	<b>First Available Practice Date:</b> February 1, 2021 <b>First Available Competition Date:</b> February 22, 2021 <b>Last Play Date:</b> March 27, 2021 <b>Available Competition Weeks:</b> 5 Weeks
<b>Spring Sports</b> Baseball Softball Lacrosse Tennis Track and Field	<b>First Available Practice Date:</b> March 15, 2021 <b>First Available Competition Date:</b> April 5, 2021 <b>Last Play Date:</b> June 5, 2021 <b>Available Competition Weeks:</b> 9 Weeks <b>Culminating Event/Tournament:</b> June 7-19, 2021	<b>First Available Practice Date:</b> April 26, 2021 <b>First Available Competition Date:</b> May 17, 2021 <b>Last Play Date:</b> June 19, 2021 <b>Available Competition Weeks:</b> 5 Weeks