

ORGANIZED 1946

MEMBER OF THE
NATIONAL FEDERATION OF
STATE HIGH SCHOOL
ASSOCIATIONS



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Maryland State Department of Education
200 West Baltimore Street
Baltimore, MD 21201

ANNOUNCEMENT

To: MPSSAA Board of Control

From: R. Andrew Warner, MPSSAA Executive Director *RAW*

Date: May 5, 2021

Subject: Spring 2021 Board of Control Meeting

MPSSAA President, Mr. Michael Duffy, has called the spring meeting of the MPSSAA Board of Control for May 19, 2021, at 10:00 a.m. at the **Winters Mill High School, 560 Gorsuch Road, Westminster, MD 21157**. The meeting will be held in the school auditorium. A map of the parking lot and entrance location is attached.

Major items on the agenda include:

- Vote on Proposed COMAR Waiver Requests for 2021-2022 (proposal attached)
- Spring Tournament Bulletins for Potential State Championships in 2021 (see attached)
- Approve Fall 2021 Bulletins
- Approve Winter 2021-2022 Bulletins
- Reports from State Tournament Directors

Voting representatives and copies of tournament bulletins may be found on the [Spring 2021 Board of Control Meeting's Page](#).

Please make every effort to be in attendance. If you cannot be present, please communicate with your local school system Supervisor of Athletics, who may find another representative from your school system or they may request a virtual option to the MPSSAA office.

Thank you.

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To: MPSSAA Board of Control

From: R. Andrew Warner, MPSSAA Executive Director *RAW*

Date: May 19, 2021

Subject: COMAR 13A.06.03 Waivers

PURPOSE:

To review waiver recommendations from the MPSSAA Executive Council related to requirements for interscholastic athletics from July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022 to ensure a continuity of participation opportunities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

BACKGROUND/HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE:

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSSAA) requested waivers of the State Board of Education on June 23, 2020, for the operation of interscholastic athletics for the 2020-2021 academic year. These waiver requests led to local school system individualized plans to maximize participation and student engagement while mitigating the health concerns associated with COVID-19. Some of the most common and fundamental statewide regulations for interscholastic athletic participation as found in COMAR 13A.06.03 require set scheduling and sanctioning of contests. The MPSSAA fully expects all local school systems to begin participation on the first available practice date and compete within the traditional seasonal timeframes defined in COMAR 13A.06.03.03 A. The MPSSAA, however, believes there could be potential situations in which a school or team may have to temporarily pause or quarantine due to COVID-19 exposures. The MPSSAA requested waivers will allow local school systems to modify schedules in order to not adversely affect other schools and teams in order to maximize participation.

RECOMMENDATION BEFORE THE BOARD OF CONTROL: The Local School Superintendents designees for interscholastic athletics have been meeting regularly with the MPSSAA Executive Director to address issues related to COVID-19, such as identifying concerns, sharing best practices, and making recommendations for the return of interscholastic athletics and activities aligned with the *MPSSAA Return to Interscholastic Athletics* guidance. The MPSSAA Executive Council with support from all 24 school systems has identified certain Maryland Annotated Code, the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) that would alleviate logistical barriers related to providing a continuity of participation. As a result of reviewing the

Maryland Annotated Code, the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR), the MPSSAA Executive Council is proposing the MPSSAA Board of Control put forth the following proposed waiver requests for consideration from Local Superintendents of Schools, the State Superintendent of Schools, and the State Board of Education for the 2021-2022 academic year.

COMAR 13A.06.03.03 B(1) - Maximum Number of Contests During a Sports Season - Request waiver of the requirement that all sports schedules must be set by the first allowable playdate. This provides local school systems the flexibility to reschedule and adapt to the latest response to COVID-19 per locale. Some areas may see interruptions during the course of the year. The waiver requests provides flexibility in scheduling requirements to ensure these interruptions due not adversely affect other schools in order to provide a continuity of participation opportunities. **NOTE:** This recommendation does not change the seasonal and weekly limitations for the number of contests allowed per school athletic team and student participation during the course of a season. All schools will be required to participate within each defined sport season as established in COMAR 13A.06.03.03 A.

.03 Sports Seasons

Member MPSSAA schools shall conduct all interscholastic athletic contests and practice sessions in accordance with the following:

B. Maximum Number of Contests Permitted During a Sports Season.

(1) All school athletic schedules shall be established before the first MPSSAA allowable play date of each sport's season according to the following instructions.

COMAR 13A.06.03.09(1)(b) - Sanctioning for Interstate Competition - Request waiver of the sanction request deadline date for interstate competition. The waiver does not change the requirement to request sanction approval from the MPSSAA, but provides flexibility to make necessary modifications during the course of the year.

13A.06.03.09 Sanction Rules

C. Sanctioning Guidelines.

(1) Sanctioning for Interstate Competition.

(b) A school or school system that wishes to serve as a host for an interstate contest shall file the appropriate sanction request form prior to the first play date and at least 15 days prior to the event for events within the first 2 weeks of the season.

COMAR 13A.06.03.09(2)(c) - Sanctioning for Intrastate Competition - Request waiver of the sanction request deadline date for intrastate competition. The waiver does not change the requirement to request sanction approval from the MPSSAA, but provides flexibility to make necessary modifications during the course of the year.

13A.06.03.09 Sanction Rules

C. Sanctioning Guidelines.

(2) Sanctioning for Intrastate Competition.

(c) The host school shall file the appropriate sanction request form with the MPSSAA Executive Director prior to the first play date and at least 15 days prior to the event for events within the first 2 weeks of the season.

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To: MPSSAA Board of Control Representatives

From: R. Andrew Warner, MPSSAA Executive Director *RAW*

Subject: MPSSAA Spring State Championships

The Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSSAA) commends the work of our local school systems (LSS) in the recent return of interscholastic athletics and activities in each one of our 24-member educational systems. On May 7, 2021, the MPSSAA will see for the first time in 713 days the ability for all 24 local school systems to offer a spring sport competition in baseball, softball, lacrosse, tennis, and track and field. This achievement has been accomplished largely in part because of the continuous strong support for education-based athletics and activities by the leadership of our LSS.

In 1946, the MPSSAA was organized to create an administrative body for the collective purpose of providing each generation of youth the educational values found in system wide interscholastic extracurricular opportunities. One of the first administrative decisions of this body was to engage the current high school students in a set of spring sports the very same year. Ironically, on the 75th Anniversary of the MPSSAA, the association is looking through a similar lens as the educational architects of the MPSSAA. After the cancellation of a full year of participation opportunities and culminating state tournaments, the MPSSAA is putting forth a proposal for the return of statewide competition this spring.

On May 19, 2021, the MPSSAA will convene its annual Spring Board of Control Meeting. This meeting will allow the MPSSAA and its sport directors for each spring sport to propose plans for state competitions during the spring of 2021. These plans have been prepared for consideration by superintendents, school boards, district leaders, and the Board of Control. Upon review and consideration, the MPSSAA is requesting voting members of the Board of Control to communicate with the leadership of your LSS and formulate voting intentions in advance of the upcoming meeting. In order to assist you in making these decisions, the MPSSAA is offering the following information on the rationale, logistics, and the intended outcomes of the implementation of spring state championships.

The MPSSAA is committed to promoting the safe participation of student-athletes across the state of Maryland, in order to promote the physical, mental, and social-emotional well-being of students. Since the beginning of this pandemic, the MPSSAA has collaboratively worked with its medical advisory committee and counterpart

state associations to lead the return of in-person participation. The MPSSAA office has a weekly 1.5-hour call with its counterparts in Delaware, District of Columbia, Kentucky, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia. With the exception of the District of Columbia, all of these counterpart and bordering states will finish the 2020-2021 academic year offering state championships in all three sport seasons. These states are using similar policies and procedures collectively developed within these weekly meetings of the State Associations. It is also important to note that Maryland is one of three states (District of Columbia and New York) in the country who have yet to fully implement a return to statewide competition.

On April 22, 2021, the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) issued a letter to LSS Superintendents, recommending that all schools continue to reference guidance from the MPSSAA related to school sports. If approved, state tournaments would be administered in alignment with the MPSSAA guiding principles, policies and procedures that have been formulated through medical advisory committees, a compact of state associations, and each of our 24 local school systems and their return to play teams. These resources continue to serve as the approved resources for the administration of interscholastic athletics, per the MDH.

The following policies and plans from our sport bulletins serve as a supplemental resource for member schools to guide the implementation of state tournaments, including addressing challenges that may arise prior to and during competition. As you will see, the proposal addresses graduation conflicts, finances, eligibility of seniors, realigning schools to minimize transportation, and actions of the MPSSAA Classification Committee to allow schools to compete in smaller geographical areas to the extent possible. It is the goal of the MPSSAA to potentially reengage state competition in the spring season and use this experience to springboard interscholastic athletics across the state into the following school year.

The MPSSAA Executive Council, along with the sport committees and other standing committees, believe that the proposal addresses logistical issues that may arise and provides a plan for successfully administering spring state competition. Additionally, from a health and safety perspective, the proposal has been endorsed by the Chair of the MPSSAA Student-Athlete Medical Advisory Committee. Following the cancellation of the entire spring 2020 competition season, the proposal would allow for spring student-athletes to play for a region and state championship. In doing so, the MPSSAA recognizes and respects the regulations and decisions of LSS and jurisdictions and the operating procedures outlined in this document ensure that such local conditions are honored and implemented.

In closing, the MPSSAA is committed to maximizing the participation opportunities for student-athletes across the state and feel that the attached proposal provides a framework for safely returning to state competition during the spring 2021 season. Questions or feedback should be directed to your representative on the MPSSAA Executive Council.

MPSSAA Bulletin Plans and Policies 2021 Spring State Championship Competition

The Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSSAA) has developed the following plans with the input of its coaches and athletic directors on Spring Sport Committees, our State Sport Directors for Baseball, Softball, Lacrosse, Track & Field, and Tennis, local school system Supervisors of Athletics, and the MPSSAA Executive Council. In addition, mitigation strategies previously approved by the Maryland Department of Health and MPSSAA Medical Advisory Committee are included in this document.

The MPSSAA has extracted points of emphasis from these sport bulletins in order to provide important points of information and the significant steps taken in order to administer Spring State Championships. The MPSSAA requests each of our voting members of the Board of Control to review these measures, consult the leadership of their local school system, and be prepared at the Board of Control meeting to vote on these policies and procedures.

Members of the Board of Control can preview the drafts of these Spring Sport Bulletins and Board of Control documents through [MPSSAA Board of Control 2021 Meetings page](#).

POLICIES PERTAINING TO ALL SPORT TOURNAMENTS

- A. **Graduations:** The MPSSAA strives to promote an education-based athletics program in each local school system. In recognition of the importance of commencement exercises to each student and family, the MPSSAA is committed to prioritizing schools' commencement activities over its postseason schedule.

If the postseason schedule and graduation schedule for a student or school conflict, the school athletic directors and local supervisors of athletics will coordinate schedule alterations in conjunction with the regional directors, sport directors, and the MPSSAA office. These multiple layers of oversight will ensure students are not forced to make a decision between commencement and postseason athletics. The MPSSAA is currently aware of the dates of all commencement exercises in the 24 school systems. Accordingly, 140 of the member schools will have completed their graduation ceremonies prior to the start of any Spring Tournament.

- B. **Finances and Admission:** The MPSSAA will charge admission based on the spectator limitations for each venue during the State Semifinals and Finals. Tickets will only be available online with no box offices open on site. It is expected by the MPSSAA that each local school system, when able to do so, shall charge admission at all regional and state quarterfinals in compliance with the local MPSSAA District policies.
- C. **Student Eligibility:** MPSSAA regulations allow graduates to participate in the remaining athletic contests of that semester in which they graduated (COMAR 13A.06.03.02K). NOTE: In a review of the scheduled final state championship dates in 2020, half of the states in the country finish state championships during the month of June.

In 2021, the tentative end date for the state championships in surrounding states includes Delaware on June 5, District of Columbia and Ohio on June 12, Pennsylvania on June 18, Kentucky on June 19, and West Virginia and Virginia on June 26, 2021.

- D. All participating schools shall abide by rules established by the tournament committee.
- E. A school or school system has the privilege and right to decide whether or not it will participate in a tournament.
- F. All information found in the MPSSAA Spring Bulletins for COVID-19 mitigation and the MPSSAA Return To Play Guidance are incorporated by reference into this document and shall be utilized to minimize the spread of COVID-19 during the State Tournaments.
- G. **Multi-Jurisdictional Competition** - Each local school system shall have implemented COVID-19 policies and procedures in place in accordance with Maryland Department of Health, MPSSAA, and local school and health department requirements. During any multi-jurisdictional competition, the policies and procedures of the hosting sites jurisdiction shall be followed by all competing schools. When conflicts arise in which representatives, including but not limited to coaches, participants, and spectators, are not following the mandated COVID-19 policies and procedures of the local school system, the site director in collaboration with school administration shall have the authority to:
 - a. Initially provide a warning to those not in compliance to adhere to the local school system policies.
 - b. Suspend the competition and refer the conflict to Supervisors of Athletics for resolution.
 - c. The MPSSAA Executive Director shall be consulted.
- H. **Shared Responsibility** - Games and Events will be contested on the basis of shared responsibilities. Personnel from the visiting schools must accept their joint responsibilities with the persons in charge for supervision and maintenance of behavior on the part of students, spectators, and participants. This includes COVID-19 mitigation policies and procedures, good sportsmanship, exemplary behavior, and protection of property are of primary importance before, during and after each contest.
- I. **Point of Emphasis** - The MPSSAA would like to make a point of emphasis for coaches. Coaches are reminded that you set the tone for your team and are the foremost influential figures representing your school. Your adherence and the adherence of your team and school to the mitigation requirements and recommendations will be a determining factor on the ability of these programs to continue operating within the modifications caused by COVID-19.

- J. COVID-19 Exposure During the Tournament** - All local school system policies will be followed related to a COVID-19 positive case or exposure during the state tournament. The following procedures will be utilized for determining the continuity of participation if one of these situations occurs.
- a. If a team is unable to advance in the state tournament due to COVID-19 the following should occur.
 - i. If the teams have not played each other, the non-COVID team will advance to the next round of competition.
 - ii. If the teams have played each other and the advancing team cannot proceed due to COVID, the team scheduled to play next will receive a bye/forfeit and advance to the subsequent round.
 - b. If a school has difficulty after the state tournament begins and the school must withdraw from the tournament (Example: Team A advances to the state quarterfinals, but more than half the team leaves upon graduating).
 - i. If a team/individual has entered the state tournament and must withdraw for reasons other than COVID, leave the field of play before the completion of a contest, or fails to continue play when eligible to do so, it will be considered conduct detrimental to the state tournament and penalties may be imposed.
 - ii. When a team/individual competes and loses during the state tournament, the losing team/individual does not advance if the winning team/individual is unable to compete in the next round. The next round game will become a forfeit and the team scheduled to play will advance to the next round.
 - iii. Contest dates will only be altered if there is a conflict with graduation.

POLICIES PERTAINING TO TEAM SPORT TOURNAMENTS - Baseball, Softball, Lacrosse

- A. **Classifications and Regions:** In order to administer opening round contests, the MPSSAA reserves the right in consultation with local supervisors of athletics to create smaller pods of teams within any region or state quarterfinals to continuously ensure participation in smaller geographic areas. In the region quarterfinals and semifinals, the smaller pods may affect only certain regions at the discretion of the MPSSAA and local school systems.
- B. Every school is automatically entered into the region tournament unless the MPSSAA office receives written notification to the contrary. Requests for withdrawal shall be submitted by the local supervisor of athletics.

- C. There will be NO minimum divisor for seeding purposes. A school's regular season number of contest will not adversely affect seeding.
- D. Unless a specific alternate plan has been approved, all State Quarterfinal and Semifinal games will be played at the site of the higher seed.
- E. Spectator capacities will be in compliance with all hosting sites jurisdiction for regional and state contests at local high schools.
- F. State Final contests are being scheduled at a neutral site facility. Spectator capacity will be limited in order to be in compliance with hosting site policies as well as those of the local jurisdiction.

POLICIES PERTAINING TO INDIVIDUAL SPORT TOURNAMENTS - Tennis, Track & Field

- A. **Classifications and Regions:** In order to administer smaller regional meets, the MPSSAA classification committee has created Track and Field and Tennis sectional regions to host small geographical area 4-8 line brackets for the opening round.
- B. Modifications to the regional qualifying system creates limited participants in the regional finals.
- C. Track and Field has eliminated automatic qualifiers, ensuring only eight entries per event at the Regional Finals and State meet.
- D. All Track and Field region meets will take place in a one-day format.
- E. Tennis is set up as a single-elimination tournament, ensuring the Regional Finals will contest a single match and the State Tournament will contest a Semifinal and Final round only.

TENTATIVE TIMELINE FOR OPERATION OF MPSSAA SPRING STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS

May 2021	
Dates/Sports	Actionable Items/Schedule of Events
5/19/21	Board of Control Meeting
5/19 - 6/1	Communication on State Championship Decision
5/19 - 6/1	Secure State Final Sites based on BOC Decision
JUNE 2021	
Dates/Sports	Actionable Items/Schedule of Events
6/4/21	Seeding of State Tournament for Lacrosse, Baseball, Softball, Tennis Regionals, Entry Deadline for Track Regionals
Baseball/Softball Playoffs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Monday 6/7/21 Regional QF 2. Wednesday 6/9/21 Regional SF 3. Friday 6/11/21 Regional Final 4. Monday 6/14/21 State QF 5. Wednesday 6/16/21 State SF 6. Friday/Saturday 6/18/21-6/19/21 State Final
Lacrosse Playoffs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Monday 6/7/21 Regional QF 2. Wednesday 6/9/21 Regional SF 3. Friday 6/11/21 Regional Final 4. Monday 6/14/21 State QF 5. Wednesday 6/16/21 State SF 6. Friday/Saturday 6/18/21-6/19/21 State Final
Track/Tennis Playoffs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Saturday 6/5/21 - 6/10/21 Sectional Region Meet - Avoid Graduations, SAT Testing (6/5), and flexibility for facility use with other sports. 2. Saturday 6/12/21 - Regional Final Meet 3. Monday 6/14/21 - Tuesday 6/15/21 - Regional Final Meet for any meets unable to go on 6/12/21. 4. Thursday - Saturday 6/17/21 - 6/19/21- State Final Meets



Winters Mill High School

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Gorsuch Rd

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Gorsuch