

**Friday February 5, 2021**

**Athletics Update:**

I hope everyone is staying safe and healthy during this lengthy and awful pandemic. It has certainly been awhile since our athletic department has provided an update on where we are with our sports programs and their training and competition seasons. We opted not to post an update towards the end of the semester this past December because it would have been more of the same dreary information and speculation. Then, to start the new year, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LACDPH) strongly recommended a pause on “non-essential” activities, athletics being one of them, so SAMOHI followed that recommendation along with many schools and districts across the southland. Now that the regional stay-at-home health order and the LACDPH recommendation has been lifted, there is actually some hopeful news to report for SAMOHI Athletics! For this update, I would like to focus on three main topics: relaunch of athletics, athletic clearance and participation and finally the multi-sport student athlete.

**1. Relaunch of Athletics:**

We are excited to announce that we are going to restart our athletic conditioning and skill-building workouts this coming Monday February 8<sup>th</sup>! Please know that participation in these workouts continue to be **completely voluntary** and will not affect the student’s grade in their 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> period PE/Athletics class. However, to be eligible to participate, all student-athletes must complete the clearance process and be cleared by our athletic trainer. For more information on the athletic clearance process including links to our step-by-step guide, physical form and more, please visit: <https://www.smmusd.org/Page/4222>

The relaunch our sports programs will be conducted in a measured and phased approach. Please refer to the following link before continuing as it lists the assigned health tiers for each CIF sport for competition (Note: At the time of this update LACDPH **has not** adopted these guidelines and remains *more restrictive* in their youth sports guidance):

<https://cifss.org/news/education-based-athletics-covid-19-tier-map-updated-12-29-20/>

**Phase I: Weeks of 2/8-2/22**

Aquatics, cross-country/track and football will begin this coming Monday February 8<sup>th</sup>. Aquatics will resume their workouts at the Swim Center at SMC, while cross-country and football will utilize Cady Track, our new turf field and Sealy Field so we can spread out as much as possible at this time. In addition, we have staggered practice times and identified multiple entry/exit gate locations to avoid overlap and overcrowding as best we can. The remainder of sports assigned by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and CIF to the purple health tier plan on starting in the coming weeks, and the head coaches for the sports of golf and tennis will communicate the specific details of their plans.

**Phase II: Weeks of 2/15-2/22**

Sports currently assigned by CDPH and CIF in the red health tier for competition will begin during this phase. Those red tier sports are baseball, girls’ lacrosse and softball. In addition, some gym/indoor sports including basketball and volleyball plan on starting outdoor workouts during this second phase. As with the first phase, head coaches of programs scheduled in Phase II will be in communication with their students and families on the details and procedures prior to starting.

### **Phase III: Weeks of 2/22-3/1**

Spring field sports assigned to the orange health tier (boys' lacrosse and soccer) and the remaining indoor/yellow tier sports (wrestling and cheer) plan on scheduling their workouts during this phase. Again, the head coaches of sports beginning in this tier will be in contact with their families to provide them with the necessary information prior to the first workout.

As noted in each phase description, the head coaches will be in communication prior to their planned start to outline what to expect, dates/day/times, facility site, pod assignments, entry/exit locations and procedures, etc. One of the procedures that will be consistent across all programs will be the use of the following website to assist in the screening process: <http://bchdcovidscreen.org>

### **2. Athletic Clearance and Participation:**

First, as previously mentioned, completing the athletic clearance process is mandatory to participate in the voluntary workouts as well as eventual competition. Here are the links posted on our athletic page on the SAMOHI website:

Athletic Clearance Guide: <https://www.smmusd.org/Athletics-Clearance>

Physical Exam Form: <https://www.smmusd.org/Athletics-HealthHistory>

Physical Exam Options (contact provider to confirm pricing and for more information): <https://www.smmusd.org/cms/lib/CA50000164/Centricity/Domain/2940/PediatricSportsPhysicalExamSites.pdf>

It is recommended that if a student-athlete hasn't started the athletic clearance process that they do so soon so they can complete the process and be cleared for their sport prior to the relaunch phase they've been assigned to. The fact that athletic participation is completely voluntary at this time cannot be stressed enough. Athletic clearance does not represent some binding agreement steering students towards participation. On the contrary, it is recommended so athletes and their families have options to act in their best interests in terms of ensuring the health and wellbeing of their loved ones.

As we transition from winter to spring, our athletic department is preparing for various scenarios, all of which involve some form of eventual competition in our remaining sports and at the same time addressing students, staff and their families' social-emotional and physical health needs and concerns. Currently, athletic clearance numbers remain alarmingly low across the athletic department compared to previous school years. At this stage in the year, we are interpreting this as a sign of communication from our students and families that there is considerable concern about participating in any in-person athletic activities at this moment. If this is fairly accurate, we would like to state that many of you are not alone in having these concerns. As we have seen with this pandemic, there are a wide range of opinions and viewpoints across the spectrum and the athletics community is no exception. Currently, our goals are not focused on win-loss percentages, individual/team records or championships. Our single mission as an athletic department is to work together to support one another and sustain an empathetic environment that provides an opportunity to participate and hopefully compete for those that feel comfortable in doing so.

With the spring sports season fast approaching we are faced with making some tough decisions, such as canceling levels for the upcoming seasons, if more student-athletes aren't

cleared in certain sports in the next 7-14 days. Head coaches of the most impacted programs will provide specific information to their families to work together in providing a plan that best serves everyone moving forward. This could come in the form of a student and/or parent survey as coaches continue to compile and provide information in order to assist in planning the best course of action.

Other programs are further along in the athletic clearance process and as a result were scheduled in the first couple of phases of the relaunch. Coaches have been instructed to account for all students on their rosters when planning their pods so if students and their families decide to participate in the voluntary workouts after they initially start, they will be welcomed back by immediately assigning them to the appropriate pod or cohort after their athletic clearance is confirmed by our trainer.

### 3. Multi-Sport Athletes:

Before we address this topic, please refer to the following link that lists the CIF sports and what season they have been placed in for the 2020-2021 school year. The linked memo also provides the dates of each sport's competition season:

<https://www.smmusd.org/cms/lib/CA50000164/Centricity/Domain/2940/SouthernSectionSportsCalendars.pdf>

To start, it's unfortunate that unless state, county and CIF guidelines change, most multi-sport athletes will have to decide which sport they will commit themselves to for this school year. Ideally any student-athlete that participates in a fall and spring sport will make this decision prior to when their fall sport start their workouts, which could happen as soon as this coming Monday. Any student-athlete that starts participating in their fall sport's workouts before transitioning to their spring sport will have to quarantine from both sports for 10 straight days before they can participate in their assigned spring sport pod/cohort. Barring any unforeseen changes in guidelines it is recommended that these athletes notify their fall coach and adviser to transfer into their spring sport's 6<sup>th</sup> period PE class **no later than the week of February 15<sup>th</sup>** so they can account for the 10-day quarantine process between sports. During the quarantine period they will still have the opportunity to participate in the 6<sup>th</sup> period DL class their coach teaches. The exception to this scenario is if a multi-sport athlete has the same head coach for both sports. For instance, Coach Flanders water polo/swimming students or Coach Fischer's cross-country/track students.

Students that participate in two or more sports that have been assigned in the spring will have to make a choice before the first sport's competition season begins. As with the fall-spring scenario, ideally the student-athlete determines the spring sport prior to the start of workouts to avoid the quarantine period. Once a decision is made, the student-athlete should communicate their intentions to all their coaches to ensure a clear line of communication across the affected programs. If the student chooses to transfer from the 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> period PE/Athletics class they're currently scheduled in, they must inform their coaches and adviser so they can be scheduled into the class of the sport they have selected.

Students that participate in a CIF sport at SAMOHI and also an outside club team will also have to decide which program they want to play for. Due to current CDPH and LACDPH cohorting guidelines, CIF has prohibited a student-athlete's involvement with both a school and club program during the same season or time period. Students in this situation can continue to train with their club team until competitions begin with the school program. If a

student decides to commit to the school program, they will have to also quarantine for 10 days before participating in their pod training or allowable practice.

This is a considerable amount of information to digest, so I apologize for this update's length. At the same time, there is a level of excitement from our athletic department that there is so much positive news to report! If you have any general questions about any of this, please feel free to contact me through email. If you have more sport-specific questions, please start with the appropriate head coach first since they will most likely have the details you're inquiring about.

Momentum seems to be finally building towards sports competition so we anticipate more information being released in the coming weeks. When that time comes we will send another update. We appreciate all your support and patience throughout the last 11 months and we hope to send out more good news very soon!

Go Vikings!

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