

Friday February 26, 2021

Athletics Update:

SAMOHI Athletics Community:

It has been an extremely hectic time the last two to three weeks with several memos, revisions, updates and more updates from CIF, LACDPH and CDPH. The exciting result is that student-athletes who participate in all outdoor sports will be allowed to compete this school year! For the full text of the LACDPH youth sports update, please visit the following link:

http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/docs/protocols/Reopening_SportsLeagues.pdf

In short, what the LACDPH youth sports guidance released yesterday allows, is a full return to outdoor sports while we remain in the purple health tier, so long as our county's adjusted case rate is 14.0 or below. COVID-19 data for counties across the state is released every Tuesday and this week LA County had an adjusted case rate of 12.3, which means the guidance linked above takes effect starting today! For fall/season 1 sports this means we will be preparing to compete in a three-week boys' and girls' water polo season along with a complete Bay League football season, with water polo set to travel to Palos Verdes High School for their first games of the season on Thursday March 4th!

For spring/season 2 sports, the LACDPH youth sports guidance allows for these sports to start on time and enjoy their full seasons as scheduled by the CIF Southern Section last July. The exceptions to this guidance are the indoor sports that usually take place in the winter—basketball, wrestling and volleyball (girls' in the fall, boys' in the spring). We remain hopeful that as long as we continue to remain vigilant on wearing masks, washing our hands, avoiding large indoor gatherings and maintaining proper distancing measures as much as possible, those indoor sports will have the opportunity to compete in their seasons as cases go down and vaccination rates rise.

This is definitely a busy time and the pace should become more frenzied in a good way with coaches passing along practice and game schedules in addition to other important information to families as the return of athletics continues. All of our coaches have planned their return to workouts and competition and most of our sports programs have started with more beginning next week and the remaining sports planning workouts to begin between March 8-15. The relaunch of athletics has been a success so far, offering opportunities to our student-athletes to train with teammates they haven't seen in-person for nearly a year. The lower campus (and volleyball with Coach Sato in the Innovation Quad!) has been full of excited athletes and coaches that has brought a kind of energy to our athletic facilities that has been long overdue. In a couple of weeks our student-athletes will be working together in all of our 25 CIF sports across eight different sites in our city which include two brand new turf fields—football on our new blue turf and lacrosse opening up Belmar Park this coming Monday March 1st!

While there's plenty to be excited about, there's also plenty of things that need to be addressed that continue to be affected by the pandemic:

1. Athletic Clearance and Participation:

We continue to see more student-athletes start, complete and be cleared in the athletic clearance process. Athletic clearance is required to participate in athletics and what is still being considered as a voluntary activity. As we get closer to athletic competition, some sports will experience a reduction in levels that we consider temporary and only in effect for the remainder of the school year. The factors that determined these decisions can vary by sport and situation and is something

that many schools across the Southland are dealing with, so in comparison, we are very fortunate to have the students, coaches, staff and parents that we do for their efforts in sustaining our athletic program. For example, our Bay League is the only league from our local association (others are Ocean and Pioneer) that have planned to field more than one level of football and as many games across varsity and junior varsity boys' and girls' water polo as possible in its three-week season. Had we been in the Ocean League this school year we might be looking at a league schedule with three other schools for football and only El Segundo participating in water polo.

2. Tryouts:

We have received more and more questions about tryouts in the last few weeks as we have prepared our athletics relaunch. This has been one of the most agonizing situations we have faced since last May that continues to frustrate our prospective student-athletes, their families and all of our coaches. Speaking on behalf of the SAMOHI coaches, please know they have wanted to conduct tryouts in the worst way for the past several months. The Class of 2024 is vital to the future existence of all of our sports programs and there's no other group of people that understand this more than our collection of head coaches. Despite all the optimistic news surrounding high school athletics recently, the prospect of tryouts in the 2020-2021 school year remains stuck in neutral. As has been explained to numerous parents, the issue is access. It is widely accepted that participating in tryouts is a pre-requisite to being selected for a program and as a result, is considered mandatory. So, because participation in tryouts is typically mandatory the process must be accessible for those that are interested. This is why freshman tryouts cannot be conducted within a 6th period sports class since it could exclude interested students who might have a conflict being enrolled in an academic class during that same time. In this instance, the pandemic is causing the accessibility issue, as we cannot limit tryouts to only those willing to do so during a health crisis when most in-person instruction continues to be prohibited on high school campuses across all of Los Angeles County. We continue to monitor the situation and plan to conduct in-person tryouts as soon as it's allowed by our state and county agencies.

3. Multi-Sport Athletes:

Days after we sent our update earlier this month which addressed multi-sport issues, CIF reinstated its waiver to allow outside competition during the season of sport (CIF bylaws 600-605). This waiver for only the 2020-2021 school year allows for student-athletes to participate in club and their high school teams at the same time. The CIF confirmed that the CDPH cohorting policy was not a mandate but a recommendation. It is our stance along with Malibu High School and therefore SMMUSD, that we will follow the recommendations of CDPH and LACDPH in doing our best to maintain stable cohorts. We base this decision on what we should do versus what we can do, to ensure we preserve athletic competition through the end of the school year for all of our district students. This means that student-athletes that are part of two or more SAMOHI sport programs that take place during the same season will have to choose which sport they will compete in this school year prior to the earliest competition start date from those sports they play. As was explained in the 2/5/2021 update, multi-sport athletes should communicate with both coaches their intentions and contact their advisor if a 6th or 7th period schedule change is necessary. Multi-sport athletes may play in more than one SAMOHI sport if it takes place in two different seasons. For instance, a student could play both football (fall/season 1 sport) and basketball (spring/season 2 sport) this school year.

4. No-Spectator Policy:

As with our multi-sport policy in the last section, we must do our best to ensure athletic competition continues through the remainder of the school year. Another sacrifice that must be made is to continue our policy that only allows student-athletes, coaches and essential staff at practices and games until further notice. We greatly appreciate the unconditional support of our parents and families in following these procedures as we restart athletics at SAMOHI. This is also a tough policy to enact when we also face serious transportation issues and limitations, but with LACDPH urging everyone to remain vigilant and cautious as well as warning us of the potential impact of new variants, our priorities must remain focused on our student-athletes and everyone's health and well-being. We sympathize with all of our parents and guardians, especially to those that have seniors in the Class of 2021. We recognize that it's been such an adverse two years for this class and their families so we are doing our best to come up with strategies where we can sustain and make exceptions such as senior recognition days and nights, but only if it can be done safely.

As with our last update there is a lot of information to digest here. We hope with the most recent LACDPH youth sports guidance, we're done with these updates for now as we all try to do our best to do what's required to practice and play safely in accordance with the LACDPH and CIF guidelines and the policies that SAMOHI/SMMUSD have put in place. With competition scheduled to begin next week with water polo, we realize that there is much more to be discussed including travel, additional protocols, including those at opposing school sites, fundraising, etc. so we will continue to provide updates so that everyone can feel as comfortable as they possibly can with their decision as a family on how they participate in athletics for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year.

We are extremely excited for our student-athletes' opportunity to resume their athletic careers at SAMOHI. Once again, thank you for all your help to make this happen and to ensure that it continues moving forward by working together in support of one another.

Go Vikings!

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