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Christian Brothers High School football head coach John Wiley, left, motivates his players to sprint during planned socially-distanced summer conditioning drills, minus a football, June 18 on the Sacramento school's new turf.

Regional coaches vent on stalled football season

BY JOE DAVIDSON

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Imagine having a football workout without the benefit of a ball.

This scenario is playing out for high school football teams across the state. For some, the ball is there, but in spirit only, to be admired and envied, or to be used in a reduced role. That's like bowling without a ball. Just stare at those pins, hands on hips, tapping your cool bowling shoes, and hope those pins topple.

If not for COVID-19, California coaches would this weekend be preparing for the final week of the regular season. Other states are already in the postseason. This state is still in a wait-and-hope scenario, an agonizing pause pattern in an effort to prepare or hold off the coronavirus pandemic.

The California Interscholastic Federation pushed the sports calendar to January to buy time. Schools within Sacramento County remain closed until January while those in neighboring Placer and El Dorado



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Christian Brothers High School football players, under the direction of head coach John Wiley, jump across the width of their new turf field while doing mixed, socially-distanced summer conditioning drills June 18 in Sacramento.

counties have opened with hybrid models.

For now, coaches are mired in routine that doesn't seem routine or normal at all. They meet with their student-athletes online through Zoom meetings, then they conduct modified football workouts with pods and hand sanitizer and the urging of wearing masks when drills conclude.

It's a team sport like no other, only the mandate is "Steer clear of each other." Being safe and wise is understandable, but it doesn't make it any less frustrating, especially knowing that some youth football, basketball and baseball events are playing out in the region, or that some are leaving the state to do so.

"It's like Groundhog Day, every single day," said Inder-

kum coach Casey Taylor, speaking for scores of coaches. "Players tell me they're excited to get out of the house, to get away from a computer screen to be with teammates, to work out, to feel normal. Kids want to live their lives. They need to live their lives."

Taylor added, "But we still can't have a football. I mean, we have one, but our quarterbacks are throwing the ball into a soccer net, then cleaning it off, and they can only use their own ball. It's ridiculous. We don't have a lot of answers."

Taylor reminded that he understands that the question is still rooted in safety.

"No one wants anyone to get sick or die from this virus, and it's terrible what's happened," he said. "I don't want to downplay that at all. But I have a better chance of dying in a car accident on my way to practice than from dying from this virus. Coaches want their kids to have a good experience, and it's our job to do what's best for them."

CIF UPDATE AND CONCERNS OF TESTING COSTS

CIF Executive Director Ron Nocetti said he feels for players, coaches, parents and fans.

He is all of those himself, at one time or another. He has coached, has had kids play sports and he is a fan. Nocetti is urging patience and understanding.

"We have been and continue to meet with the California Department of Public Health about high school sports returning," Nocetti said. "We are hopeful that the numbers will trend in the right direction, extremely hopeful."

FROM PAGE 1C

FOOTBALL

When a season does start, how might schools test for the virus? Who would pay for it? These are topics still being discussed at the CIF and local high school levels. No one has concrete answers.

Something to consider: Numbers. In divisions I, II and III at the collegiate sports level, there are about 1,100 schools and some 450,000 total student-athletes. In California alone, there are 800,000 student-athletes at all levels over 1,605 schools, and there are some 65,000 coaches and 60,000 officials.

Can they all be tested?

Roble coach Chris Horner conducts workouts without equipment.

He has 14 players per pod with no overlap of players or coaches into other pods. This is the norm for most everyone.

"I feel we've done a pretty good job thinking outside the box with how to install an offense and defense right now with the restrictions and guidelines that we need to follow," Horner said. "As a coach, I'm concerned about the weight lifting we are unable to do."

He added, "We just need to get back to some sense of normalcy. Kids are making the best of the situation and hope that there will be an end to it. Just make it to January when school's back in session. Just two more months! Educationally, emotionally, mentally and physically, the kids are suffering right now."



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Christian Brothers High School football players break for hydration and recovery as seen past a check-in table set up with hand sanitizer, gloves, masks and more during their planned socially-distanced summer conditioning drills June 18 at the Sacramento school.

'MENTAL HEALTH IS AT AN ALL-TIME LOW'

In Auburn, Placer coach Joey Montoya is trying to run drills in pods, to maintain morale, to answer questions on what this all means and what looms.

He knows how important sports are to kids, having grown the son and grandson of coaches at this school. Montoya burns to compete but he especially worries about the toll on his players. Will there even be a season, coach?

"I've been back and forth about football happening at all in January," Montoya said. "One week, I think it's 50-50 at best, and then other weeks, I'm cautiously optimistic. I truly hope and beg that we are able to have a season. I know there will be roadblocks and hurdles but these kids need this.

"Their mental health is at an all-time low. Grades are lower district wide than they ever have been in the history of the district. I believe that we can safely have a season and keep kids safe. I am a person who leans way on the side of being cautious, too. I wear a mask in my house! Honestly, I think we can do this. We just need a chance. Kids truly need sports. They are desperate for something positive as this has been a devastating time of their lives."

In Orangevale, Casa

COACHES WONDER ABOUT MIXED MESSAGES

At Folsom, Bulldogs coach Paul Doherty expanded his big-picture thinking on the topic.

"I have strong opinions and feelings on school closures in general," he said. "So much attention recently has been brought to social injustice in our society, systematic racism, etc. Much of that attention has been brought on athlete platforms and through sports. The young population — 17 and under — that suffer the most with this current COVID reality are the very ones our local leaders and politicians are advocating for on the opposite fronts of social justice and equality."

Doherty added, "Having taught on all ends of the spectrum in Oak Park at Sacramento High, at Whitney in Rocklin and now Folsom, I see the struggles every student-athlete is facing. It's hard for everyone, adults included. I have two young children at home struggling without friends, social interaction, recess, outlets, all of that. The value high school football can have

for young adolescents during their formative years far outweighs the risks we are taking extreme measures to limit, mitigate and oftentimes eliminate with basic social distancing and hygiene protocols for COVID-19."

As for workouts, Doherty said the Bulldogs are in pods but with no ball.

"My fear," he said, "is a rushed phase of actual preparation will lead to a rise in injuries, and coincidentally injuries to student athletes with less means to properly prepare with traditional strength and conditioning processes."

COACHES FEAR STUDENTS WHO 'CHECK OUT'

In El Dorado Hills, Eric Cavaliere coaches the defending Sac-Joaquin Section Division I champion Oak Ridge Trojans.

They led The Bee's preseason Top 50 team rankings. His campus has a hybrid model of in-person learning. Players are in the school's massive weight room four days a week, with masks, with distancing. Oak Ridge is able to use a football and a blocking sled, while distancing.

"Of course, there is reason to have doubts about our upcoming season," Cavaliere said. "I never would have guessed we'd still be here seven months ago when this all started. Football is being played in other states safely and with success. There is no reason we can't have the same here. My doubts lie with the people making these decisions, and their reasons for doing so."

Like many of his coaching peers, Cavaliere grew up playing sports. It meant something to him in the 1970s and '80s and it means a ton to him as a coach leading young men.

"The impact of playing sports goes beyond the playing fields," Cavaliere said. "These kids need these experiences to develop as young people, to help shape their futures. Without sports, who knows where we would all be right now. I am also fearful that without sports many students will 'check out' of school entirely, leading to academic failure and behavior problems on campus.

"Kids know they are missing once-in-a-lifetime opportunities, and I am sure some will react in a very negative manner. A school without sports will create an unfamiliar culture on a campus that may not be entirely positive. Hopefully, the decision makers of the world know

'HOW ARE WE GOING TO BE PLAYING FOOTBALL?'

In the southern part of Sacramento County, at Sheldon High, Chris Nixon supervises pods of 10 players with one coach, everyone six feet apart, no equipment, no ball until next week, a weight room with 14 players and two coaches and "lots of disinfecting."

"The realist in me wonders how we are going to be playing football in a month and a half from now, but as a coach, I'm hopeful knowing anything can happen," Nixon said. "It seems odd to me that CIF scheduled the full-contact sport as the first sport up when the other states making it a 'spring sport' chose February and March to start."

Nixon worries about players and opportunities.

"I really feel for the seniors," he said. "Football isn't like the other sports. The experience is strictly school-based. You can't just hop on a travel ball team. For most seniors, it's the last time they'll play the sport. For those seniors aspiring to play college ball, they'll be part of a log jam because college players get an extra year of eligibility. Not so for high school kids.

"There are far bigger things going on in the world, but I do feel for the seniors and any kid who

'TIRED OF THE VIRUS. TIRED OF ZOOM ...'

In Elk Grove, Pleasant Grove coach Matt Costa stands as a jovial sort by nature with a pained expression.

"I'm doing my best job daily to put on a happy face in Zoom classes and then in live workouts," he said. "As a teacher and a coach, I haven't been this discouraged across the board in my life, and I know I am not alone."

Costa said he is irked by what has happened and how it got to this point.

"The narrative changes daily from the people at the state government level," he said. "The fact that people have little to no empathy anymore and are willing to say the first thing that comes into their brain like some drunken bragger is getting old. I'm tired of the political discourse. Tired of the virus. Tired of teaching on Zoom. Tired of not being allowed to use a ball. Tired of people thinking that mental health is somehow not as important as physical health.

"Frankly, I am tired. If we play a game, it will be a victory. I am going to prepare like we are going to play. If we don't, it's the lack of empathy across all 50 states that led to this. If we don't play, all of us are at fault."

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JUNE 14 2020

CIF to decide in July on California's fall high school sports schedule

BY JOE DAVIDSON
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Normally, this is the time to unwind and vacation for those who work in education.

But little seems right or balanced for so many schools in California and those connected to them, from Chula Vista in the south right on through the Sacramento Valley and up to the Oregon border.

Summer instead means continuous brainstorming on how to reopen schools and restart activities and athletics amid the coronavirus pandemic.

"Since the initial school shut down in March, this has been all-consuming, no question, and

You can imagine what school superintendents, principals, coaches, teachers and so many are going through as they're trying to put together a plan to return to education, a return to campus — and by the way, getting all these questions about athletics," said Ron Nocetti, the executive director for the California Interscholastic Federation.

The CIF is the governing body for high school sports in the state. The CIF and commissions from its 10 sections dotted across the state had discussions throughout the week on sports guidelines and announced on Friday that as a

SEE HIGH SCHOOLS, 3C



PHOTO BY JEFF SANCHEZ FOR THE OREGON JOURNAL

Asust and Christian Brothers at the Holy Bowl in 2019. Both private school teams will restart practice this week, but Sacramento public school squads are still undecided, as are most across the state. The California Interscholastic Federation and its 10 sections will make an announcement July 20 on plans to allow high schools a "reasonable time frame" to prepare for a fall season, if there is a normal fall season.

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governing body it is "prepared to offer alternative calendars if it is determined by July 20 that fall sports may not start as scheduled due to ongoing public health and safety concerns."

Why that date? The CIF wrote in its release that July 20 offers a "reasonable time frame" for high schools in the state to prepare for a fall season, if there is a normal fall season.

If there is a significant spike in COVID-19 numbers in the state, or even just in certain areas, the domino effect could prompt county and state health officials to pump the breaks or slam on them for a return to campus. One line of thinking is if students are allowed on campus, then high school sports should be as well.

And this line of thinking: A massive increase in cases may keep schools closed.

The CIF guidelines for now does not include a return-to-competition phase. But by July 20, Nocetti and the 10 section commissioners believe that they will have a much more clear picture if sports schedules can start on time. If they cannot, "then what are the other alternatives that we can look into?" Nocetti said, suggesting that seasons could be pushed back later into the fall or perhaps with a January start date.

He added, "We just don't know. It's fluid."

June or July, but those are dates when football drills start.

The first football program in the state to start summer drills was Wheatland High School in late May. East Nicolaus, Sutter and Yuba City high have all started drills. Same with Hillmar. Modesto City schools have green-lighted schools to start football drills on Monday.

In Sacramento, the only schools that will start Monday with a team meeting to go over safety guidelines or protocols or to start drills are private schools, none of which have a particular school district and can be allowed if deemed safe by principals and the county health department. Bradshaw Christian, Capital Christian, Christian Brothers and Jesuit coaches will have drills and constant reminders of social distancing in drills — no packs of 50 at once — and outside campus.

"For the kids, it's not just football but it's the social things of being a teenager that's important," said Christian Brothers coach John Wiley. "We're trying to give them an outlet, but these drills aren't mandatory. Some parents may not feel safe to have their kids do this. We'll remind our kids that they can't hang out when done with conditioning, to go home, wash their clothes and take a shower."

"We want to make sure we're following all the protocols and we're doing everything we can to help lower that curve, and, hopefully, we get to play this fall."

HOLDING ONTO SPORTS

One thing that is clear is that no one in education is pushing to eliminate sports. That goes counter to the beliefs of coaches, teachers, administrators and superintendents of how engagement is part of the high school experience, critical for learning, development and enjoyment.

An online petition through Facebook has generated more than 14,000 signatures and nearly 10,000 followers to "Bring Back High School Athletics to Sacramento Area and Northern California Schools." Fans, parents, alumni and students have signed that petition. Scores of others have emailed principals, superintendents, the 10 section offices, the Sacramento-based CIF office and the county health department pleading for answers or demanding a restart to seasons.

Local superintendents have also met with area coaches to discuss.

"We receive all sorts of calls and emails, and we tell them that everyone involved in high school sports is doing everything they can to make this happen for student-athletes," Nocetti said. "At the same time, our schools and school districts have to know when they can return before we can focus on narrowing down what our sports calendars are. There's so much more information everyone needs, and that's why we're waiting until July 20. We could also announce something earlier. We want to be prepared for any scenario."

CONDITIONING IN PRIVATE SCHOOLS

No sports are played on the high school calendar in

WHO MAKES THE CALL ON RESTARTING?

One misconception is that the CIF and any of its 10 sections make the call on when schools can re-open or when sports conditioning drills can start.

Those decisions are made by the school districts, something Southern Section Commissioner Rob Wigod reminded parents, coaches and athletes in a statement: "I am sure they will follow the recommendations of state and local health authorities in arriving at the decisions that are in the best interests of their students and school communities."

The Southern Section is the largest in the state with nearly 600 schools. It includes the most populated district in the state in Los Angeles Unified with 735,000 students of all grades.

The second-largest section is the Sac-Joaquin Section that stretches from the outskirts of Merced and goes as far east as Placerville, as far north as Grass Valley and Yuba City and as far west as Fairfield.

Elk Grove Unified School District, the largest district in Northern California with 64,000 students, decided Tuesday its first day of school would be in August, pushing back its typical mid-July starting day. The decision largely affects students who attend schools with year-round schedules, where students attend classes for three months and take one month off.

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JUNE 21, 2020

HIGH SCHOOLS

Summer conditioning starts, but will there be a season?

BY JOE DAVIDSON
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John Wiley had not greeted his football players outside texting, emails or Zoom online video sessions since early March — before the coronavirus pandemic shuttered schools and a lot of the state.

So imagine the glee of the Christian Brothers High School coach this week when he ran into scores of student-athletes on campus. He greeted each with a smile, though hidden by a cloth face guard, and a fist bump. The hugs in abundance will come soon enough, Wiley figures, when social distancing isn't such an ingrained part of our thinking.

Christian Brothers is following the same guidelines of summer sports conditioning as other schools across the state. Small groups of athletes in football, volleyball and cross country are working with coaches in drills, unlike seasons past where large groups packed in for such experiences.

Social distancing drills are the first signs of the effort to get students reengaged in extracurricular activities while mindful that COVID-19 remains a threat to shutter it all down again should the numbers spike up alarmingly.

For now, the sense for area coaches is universal: it's a start.

"It'd been so long since I've seen these guys," Wiley said, "that it was, 'Oooh, he got tall-



Christian Brothers High School football players, from right, Avarie Lee, Zeke Jackson, Jared Wiley and Marcus Price take a break.

er," or, 'Oooh, he got bigger.' It's just great to see everyone. To see their smiles makes it all worth it."

Wiley added, "Patience is the key word that we all must understand as we try to get back into all of this. More than sports, getting together like this is for the experience, to be a teenager, to be with friends, and to do so while being smart and safe."

THE CHALLENGES OF DISTANCING

The challenge is profound — social distancing in a sport such as football, where that is not entirely possible. But distancing is happening now in summer drills where footballs, helmets and pads remain stored away

until official practices start later in the summer. Summer drills are designed to get athletes in shape, to be together — running, sprints, bear crawls and discussion.

No area schools are allowing their athletes to dress in locker rooms. There are no in-class skull sessions. All drills and meetings are outdoors. Students and coaches are encouraged to shower at home immediately after practice, to wash hands regularly, to wear masks. The other norm: check-in stations outside the playing fields that include jugs of hand sanitizer, masks, sign-in paperwork and a temperature check.

At Christian Brothers on Thursday, there were more grins than frowns under the

unrelenting late-afternoon sun on a hot surface. Players were glad to pour sweat on the school's sparkling new turf within a spectacular home stadium.

"It's great to be out here with the guys," said Nate Smith, a CB linebacker and a 4.6 student who says his dream school is "MIT to study aerospace."

Smith added, "We're eager to train, to do it the right way. We can do our part by being smart. Before this week, a lot of us were sad and lonely without a chance to be together. We're excited to have a season."

SEASON OF HOPE

But will there be a season? There will be if the COVID-19 concerns ease, meaning a decline in positive-test numbers. There won't any seasons in any city or towns if there are a concerning number of positive test from football rosters or even on a campus. Coronavirus is a highly contagious disease.

Said Pleasant Grove football coach Matt Costa, "If we get a football season, it won't matter who wins or loses, it'll be a victory to even have a season. We really don't know if we'll actually be able to play games. For now, coaches just want to get their kids in shape, to get together. I know I miss our guys, I just want to be around my dudes. Not being around kids is mentally taxing for a lot of us."

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Christian Brothers High School head football coach John Wiley, left, motivates his players to sprint during socially distanced summer conditioning drills Thursday on the school's new turf.

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FROM PAGE 1C

CONDITIONING

Said CB athletic director Dale Milton, "We all agree that to thrive, kids have to be active, and not just sports but music, theater, dance, rallies."

CONTROL THE CONTROLLABLES

The 50th Holy Bowl between rivals Christian Brothers and Jesuit is set for September at Hughes Stadium, where a packed stadium of some 20,000 would be expected if this were any normal season. If you think of the Holy Bowl over the decades, the prevailing thoughts are of the spirited crowds, people young and old comparing lettermen's jackets and previous scores.

But no one is thinking that far ahead. The focus is on today and tomorrow.

"Control the controllables," is how Jesuit coach Marlon Blanton put it while watching his Raiders in workouts.

"That's one of the things sports teaches you — control what you can control. Everyone wants to belong to something. It's impor-

tant to all of them."

As Milton of CB puts it, "We have to do baby steps. Start with crawling, then walking then running. We have to all be smart and safe about this."

SPORTSMANSHIP AT ITS BEST

Natomas Unified School District Superintendent Chris Evans has been a driving force in uniting area coaches and administrators in this cause, and he has been outspoken about the value of high school sports.

Evans worked the phones, emails and Zoom meetings to share ideas, hopes and concerns.

"It was super collaborative," Evans said. "We all worked with a lot of great folks, working together. We old coaches, we have those competitive juices still, and this was a perfect example of sportsmanship and being on the same page. It was sportsmanship at its best."

By the end of this month, all area school districts expect to have



Christian Brothers football players do a jumping drill across the width of field.

some sort of plan in place for summer conditioning, a slow return to campuses in an era when everyone is used to fast-forward action. Elk Grove Unified programs on Monday will have a session with coaches in regards to protocols. El Dorado County schools on Monday have a Zoom meeting with coaches to go over plans with the idea of starting drills Tuesday.

The California Interscholastic Federation, the governing body for prep sports, will announce by July 20 what its fall sports calendar will look like. The CIF does not influence state schools on

when and how to do summer drills.

Summer drills are in place with the idea of limitations.

"We as coaches and administrators have to make sure that we don't let the student-athletes do too much too soon," Jesuit athletic director Hank Weinberger said. "We have to be smart about all of this. The second you put a football into the action, it speeds up. We're not there yet."

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OVER



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Christian Brothers football players break for hydration and recovery – as seen past a check-in table set up with hand sanitizer, gloves and masks.

12/20/20

HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL

Prep teams still sidelined, but there's a chance to play

BY JOE DAVIDSON
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The scorecard for those playing football in Northern California is thin and lonely, scattered with chaos.

This sport can be unsettled enough without strange factors hovering about.

At the college level, Cal managed four games amid a trying stop-and-start season, undone by tighter COVID-19 health restrictions in California than

other parts of the Pac-12 Conference. The Bears' lone win was over Oregon, which won the Pac-12 championship game. Stanford managed to play five games.

San Jose State uprooted from its Santa Clara County base and

became the "Traveling Nomads" in an effort to stay a step ahead. The Spartans have resided in Nevada since Dec. 14. Entering Saturday's Mountain West Conference championship game against Boise

State; the Spartans were 6-0, their best showing since 1939.

The 49ers are now identified as the 49ers of Santa Clara by way of Arizona. They will finish out their trying season in the Phoenix area, meaning the last four games were out of state, due to those COVID-19 restrictions.

Sacramento State opted out of a spring schedule to prepare full bore for fall of 2021. UC Davis hopes to have a six-game spring schedule like the rest of the Big Sky Conference, but is at the mercy of those COVID-19 numbers.

SEE CHANCE, 3C



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Christian Brothers High School football head coach John Wiley, left, motivates his players to sprint during planned socially distanced summer conditioning drills, minus a football, in June on the Sacramento school's new turf.

FROM PAGE 1C

CHANCE

Regional community college programs pulled the plug this week on football and other fall sports, officially stalling out the last remnants of a 2020 season for American River College, Sacramento City, Sierra College and Yuba College. Football coaches from those schools wanted a chance to give it a go, reminding that they have wide-open spaces to condition and train. They were not granted those opportunities.

The school presidents voted to opt out, concerned the coronavirus pandemic could roar through their programs and schools.

"It's brutal," Sierra coach Ben Noonan said. "Before I went on a Zoom meetings (to inform players), I wiped away tears."

week, but a school superintendent, a principal, and — most likely — county health officials would nix that in an instant.

So regularly test players, coaches and staffers, right? Well, no. It's not that simple. It's easier to test in the NFL with 32 teams, or college football where there are hundreds of teams, and where finances are not an issue. In California alone, there are 1,600 schools, and even more if considering freshman and junior varsity programs. And tests would have to produce results in minutes, not days, to be of any use.



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Christian Brothers High players break for hydration and recovery as seen past a check-in table set up with hand sanitizer, gloves, masks and more during their planned socially distanced summer conditioning drills in June.

quarterback Justin Lamson said, "we'd take anything. Even a scrimmage. (Students having) no sports have taken a toll on kids everywhere, for sure. We need something, anything."

big picture. He misses this sport. His payers as well.

"I know this may seem a little bit trite, and I wasn't in Vietnam, but I knew a lot of people who went on planes to fight in the Vietnam War, and they either didn't come back or they came back a changed person," Hawkins said.

"The Great Depression lasted years (in the 1930s), and we got past it as a country. The Spanish Flu in 1918, we got past it.

"People have endured things before. It doesn't make it fun. It puts things into context. So what can we all do? Control what we can control. We can

**BEST-CASE SCENARIO
FOR FOOTBALL IS
MARCH, APRIL**

**LARGEST CROWD
WAITING FOR SPORTS:
HIGH SCHOOLS**

The largest football crowd on the outside wondering if it'll ever get in this academic year is the high school lot.

Some 500 programs have been on hold since summer. Schools from Santa Cruz County to the Oregon and Nevada borders are seeing red while stuck in purple. Red is the shared frustration of student-athletes, coaches and parents from the lack of state health guidelines, and then not pleased with them when finally released.

In short, if counties don't get out of the most restrictive purple tier that is reflective of positive tests and COVID-19 surges, then game over on the gridiron front. A county would have to drop down two levels to have a chance to play football games in the spring.

Gov. Gavin Newsom has become a target of angst. He reminded this week in talking to reporters that for prep football to drop into the allowable orange tier, or basketball into the yellow tier — "The virus will make that determination." He added: "We're just trying to do our best to encourage physical activity, address obvious issues of mental and brain health and get kids safely resuming based upon differentiation of risk."

The governing body California Interscholastic Federation and its 10 sections are advocating for games and seasons. Any notion that the CIF is not behind this effort, and we hear it weekly from all over, is misguided and flat wrong. The CIF, and any of its 1,600-member schools dotted across the state, are all about kids and engagement.

But no one tied to the CIF is going to defiantly ignore county health suggestions or mandates. The CIF could tell everyone to grab football gear and start up full practices next

On Monday, the California Department of Public Health posted updated youth sports guidelines, which includes high schools. No prep games of any sort will be allowed in the state until at least Jan. 25.

At best, football would likely have to be played out in the spring. The CIF and its section leaders have been in regular contact to brainstorm. They want to continue to work with public health, with Will DeBoard of the Sacramento Section office reminding things will have to "improve dramatically" to have any sort of normal prep sports seasons.

The CIF will not allow football to be played past April 16, tied to the CIF's medical advisory committee with summer/fall football too short of a turnaround. OK. So work with that. Area coaches and players are ready to roll up sleeves to their necks to get games in. There may only be five games, but that's something. There may only be one playoff game, but it's something.

"Right now," Oak Ridge

**CAL'S END, SAC STATE
AND UCD VIEWS**

This is how 2020 it was for Cal: The Bears announced just three positive tests the entire football season. But their opener against Washington was canceled and so was their season finale at Washington State, en route to the stadium in six buses, double the normal travel party to try and get as much social distancing possible.

One Cal player tested positive and the game was off, two hours before kickoff. Still, Cal athletic director Jim Knowlton said the season was worth it. He told the New York Times of how the Bears handled the news, "Our entire football team, offense versus defense, is in this snowball fight, and they are having the best time. And I thought, we just gave them heartbreaking news a half an hour ago. It just shows the resiliency of kids, the camaraderie that sports brings to teams, and all the second- and third-order effects."

In Davis, UCD coach Dan Hawkins reflected the

wish and want and could've and should've, but that gets you nowhere. What can I do? I can get up, study, eat right, get a workout in, call my parents."

Sac State coach Troy Taylor is without a fall season for the first time since he was a little boy in the 1970s. He's also a big-picture thinker and talker.

"If not playing football (this academic year) is the worst thing any of us will go through," he said, "then we've had a good life. Yes, it's disappointing but football is coming."

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YOUTH SPORTS

Updated guidelines suggest delay of play until next year

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High school sports in California will not start before Jan. 25, according to the updated youth sports guidelines posted to the state's Department of Public Health website on Monday night.

This is not a surprise. As long as the guidelines do not cancel or eliminate sports, there remains hope for the 815,000 or so student-athletes in the state who have been on hold. Many of those teenagers have done distance learning since the coronavirus pandemic shuttered schools in March. Area student-athletes have been

vocal about their frustrations of not playing, citing a mental toll.

It has been nearly five months since the governing body California Interscholastic Federation laid out its 2020-21 sports calendar after a summer of the virus surge, a process that required updates and guidance from health departments.

No school-based sporting

events have played out in California this fall, though club sports such as soccer, softball and baseball included out-of-state tournaments, now put on hold with the updated guidelines. Club football has also seen interest, including a Sacramento effort to get a team into a Southern California league next month.

For high school football or volleyball to start in January, February or March, per the initial plan released by the CIF in July, counties would have to get into a favorable level of the state's color-tiered system on COVID-19 that tracks positivity rates.

Sacramento and surrounding counties Placer, Yolo and El Dorado have for weeks been in the most restrictive purple tier. With Gov. Newsom's latest shut down last week, area prep teams have suspended sports activities.

Football and volleyball, the headliner fall sports, would not be able to start practices or compete in scrimmages or games until their counties clear the most restrictive purple and

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red tiers and drop down into the moderate orange tier. One concerning hurdle is the upcoming Christmas and New Year's holidays, a time for family gatherings, leading to what county health officials and Newsom consider risky.

Outdoor prep sports that allow for social distancing, such as cross country, track and field and golf, can start in the coming months even if counties are in the most restrictive purple tier. Cheer, baseball and softball would be allowed under the red tier.

The CIF and its 10 section commissioners will be

in contact with each other to lay out revised sports calendars. Each office will continue to be in touch with state and county health officials.

The primary winter sport is basketball, which normally would include tournaments this time of year. Basketball, according to the new guidelines, cannot be played indoors until that county is in the minimal yellow tier.

That sport was pushed to March with the first CIF calendar.

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