

Return to Competition
Morse High School Athletics
Fall 2020

Agenda

- Summer 2020
- Maine Principals' Association Sports Medicine Advisory Committee
- Development of guidelines
- Risk of Sport/Type of Play
- Face coverings
- Sports
- Recommendation

Summer 2020

On July 6th, we began Phase 1 of the Maine Principals' Association Opening High School Athletics and Activities. This phase lasted two weeks.

- General conditioning session for all sports
- Led by our Athletic Trainer (Santana Wilson) and myself
- Safety precautions included taking daily attendance, assigning cohorts, a daily screener to be filled out no earlier than one hour prior to practice, a waiver, hand sanitizer stations/pumps, and isolation area.

On July 20th, we began Phase 2.

- Offered boys' and girls' soccer, football, field hockey, cross country, sideline cheering, golf, baseball, softball, and girls' lacrosse. Teams assigned cohorts and focused mostly on general conditioning.
- We followed all safety precautions that were established during Phase 1.

Phase 3 began on August 3rd with more sport-specific drills that included multiple players (passing ball between players, live batting practice, etc.). We added boys' lacrosse to Phase 3.

Summer Success!

- Approximately 90 kids participated in Phase 1 and about 110 in Phases 2 & 3.
- Feedback from parents and athletes was very positive.
- Safety and adherence to guidelines was emphasized to coaches.

Soccer coaches would be awarded the “gold star” for organization and procedure.

- Two “incidents” that were corrected.

MPA Sports Medicine Advisory Committee

- Chair of the MPA Cross Country Committee
- Invited to 5-6 Sports Medicine Advisory Committee meetings throughout the summer
- Committee is comprised of doctors, principals, athletic directors, and certified athletic trainers
- An incredible amount of thought and discussion went into each meeting
 - Guidelines were established
 - Sent to the DOE, DHHS, Department of Economic and Community Development
 - Recommendations were made and sent back to MPA
 - MPA and state agencies met again
 - Guidelines were developed

From the Maine Principals' Association

From the document issued 9/10/2020

In developing these guidelines, the Maine Principals' Association (MPA), drew on the expertise of the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS), Maine Department of Education (MDOE), Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Maine Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED), and MPA Sports Medicine Advisory Committee (SMAC).

The MPA has sought [and received approval from] the Maine State Superintendents' Association (MSPA) and the Maine School Boards Association (MSBA) on the School Sports Guidance as well.

School Sports Guidance - Type of Play

The following types of play are defined by level from least to greatest risk. Across all types of play, keep players together in small, stable groups (i.e. cohorts) with dedicated coaches or staff. Ideally, these cohorts should include fewer than 30 individuals.

Level 1: Performing skill-building drills or conditioning at home, alone or with household members

Level 2: Team-based practice with physically distanced group activities

Level 3: Within-team competition (e.g. intrasquad scrimmages). This level of play involves one cohort of participants.

Level 4: Competition between teams from the same geographic area (e.g. the same county and in some cases adjacent counties). This level of play involves two cohorts of participants.

Level 5: Competition between teams from different geographic areas within Maine

Level 6: Competition between teams from different states

Lower Risk Level of Activity

Examples: Batting cages, tennis, pickleball, individual swimming, catch, disc golf, golf, individual biking, surfing, horseback riding, crew/sailing, fishing, hunting, motor sports, gymnastics, weightlifting, single sculling, throwing events (javelin, shot put, discus, hammer), jumping events, (high jump, pole vault, long jump, triple jump), skiing, cross country events where physical distance can be maintained.

Moderate Risk Level of Activity

Examples: Baseball, softball, team swimming, fencing, soccer, basketball, lacrosse, ice hockey, competitive and sideline cheer, martial arts, ultimate frisbee, running events where physical distance cannot be maintained, field hockey, pair figure skating, volleyball, 7 vs. 7 flag (touch) football.

High Risk Level of Activity

Examples: Football, wrestling, rugby, boxing

Face Coverings

DHHS/DOE developed the language on mask/face covering requirements based on guidance from the American Academy of Pediatrics and WHO. While physical education class guidance is appropriate to physical education classes in schools, there are key differences between these classes and school-based sports programs. Physical education classes are universal, meaning they are required for all children, which includes but is not limited to those who have medical conditions or who are at risk of elevated exposure to COVID-19. As a result, these classes regularly bring together large numbers of children in school fields and gyms. In contrast, school-based sports programs are voluntary, meaning they have fewer participants and can take place at different times and places. For these reasons, we do not believe it would be appropriate to extend physical education class guidance to voluntary school-based athletic programs.

Face Coverings - Continued

Face coverings are mandatory except during vigorous exercise. Face coverings are required when not engaged in vigorous activity (bench area, coaching instruction, etc.)

General Guidelines

- Individuals must complete daily health self-screening
- Hand sanitizer and masks must be available in all sports
- Coaches must keep accurate daily attendance
- Social distancing should be maintained where feasible
- Athletes and coaches should have their own water bottle, including visitors
- If positive test of COVID-19, follow school plan of action
- Cohorts of students during practices

Golf

Classified as “Low Risk” with Level 5 Play allowed. This means that competition between teams from different geographic areas within Maine is allowable.

- Start from one tee with spacing of start times
- Flagstick should not be touched
- Bunker rakes and ball washers should not be used
- Paper cards will not be exchanged, no pencils available, verbal agreement on scoring
- Exchange of scorecards eliminated
- No practice after round, players must depart immediately
- Only coaches may ride in carts
- Coaches must have foul-weather plan that eliminates congregating

Cross Country

Classified as “Low Risk” with Level 5 Play allowed. This means that competition between teams from different geographic areas within Maine is allowable.

- Courses widened to 6 feet
- Team tents should be 20 feet apart
- Face coverings worn to the starting line
- Starting line divided to accommodate spacing of runners
- Wave, interval, or staggered starts
- Finish corral instead of chute
- Runners are to disperse immediately after race and put on face mask at team area

Field Hockey

Classified as “Moderate Risk” with Level 4 Play allowed. This means competition between teams from the same geographic area (e.g. the same county and in some cases adjacent counties). This level of play involves two cohorts of participants.

- Limit pre-game meeting participants
- No introductions; begin gameplay immediately
- Balls should be sanitized throughout contest (3-4 in rotation)
- Mouthguards need to remain in their mouth at all times
- No chairs for carded players; must take knee
- X recommended in substitution box for distancing
- Additional time must be given between quarters for water and masking

Soccer

Classified as “Moderate Risk” with Level 4 Play allowed. This means competition between teams from the same geographic area (e.g. the same county and in some cases adjacent counties). This level of play involves two cohorts of participants.

- Limit pre-game meeting participants
- No introductions; begin gameplay immediately
- Hands and game balls sanitized after first stoppage at 20:00 minute mark
- Mouthguards need to remain in their mouth at all times
- Ball runners on far side of field, teams retrieve balls on bench side and must use feet
- No slide tackling if players are within 6 feet
- Throw ins and corner kicks: 5 offensive and 5 defensive players in box
- Indirect and free kicks: Players must remain at least 3 feet apart
- No drop ball restarts

Sideline Cheer

Classified as “Moderate Risk” with Level 4 Play allowed.

DHHS/DOE recommend having sideline cheer in the moderate risk category due to the voice projection inherent in the activity. Use of outdoor choir requirements for cheering is encouraged.

- Face coverings must be worn by cheerleaders at all times
- No giveaways (T-shirts, etc.)
- No signs or banners for team to run through
- No tumbling or stunting

Football

Classified as “High Risk” with Level 3 allowed. This means within-team competition (e.g. intra-squad scrimmages). This level of play involves one cohort of participants.

The MPA will not sponsor traditional tackle football this year; however, in order to keep students engaged, they are encouraging 7v7 flag or two-hand touch football this fall.

Recommendation

Based on currently known information, the MPA Sports Medicine Advisory Committee believes that STRICT ADHERENCE by schools and teams to these guidelines, and to each district's COVID-19 prevention plan, should provide a reasonably safe environment for return to educational programming and school-based athletics and community-based athletics. It is important to remember that all sports and activities carry a potential risk of injury and illness. The risk of contracting COVID-19 illness is in addition to the underlying risks of a given sport or activity. It is also important to note that participation in any competitive sport and/or activity is strictly voluntary for both the individuals and the schools.

Recommendation

Based on the expertise of the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS), Maine Department of Education (MDOE), Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Maine Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED), and MPA Sports Medicine Advisory Committee (SMAC), I recommend that Morse High School offer the following sports during the Fall of 2020:

- Golf
- Cross Country
- Field Hockey
- Soccer
- Sideline Cheer
- 7v7 Football (intra-squad with possibility to move to interscholastic)

Thank you for your time.

Questions?