

July 16, 2020

High School Athletic Directors, Principals, Superintendents and The Arizona Interscholastic Association (AIA),

As a unified group of Arizona High School football head coaches we have designed this letter to let our voices be heard. We commend school leader's efforts in making drastic changes to provide the best for our students. As football coaches our number one focus has always and will always be providing a unique experience for student athletes that is safe and built on teamwork.

We are concerned about the uncertainty that is happening across our state in regards to opening schools with in person learning this fall. We have seen the start date get pushed back to August 17th. We have also seen districts move in-person learning to after the first quarter, while many more seem to have the same goal. The AIA released a plan for the fall season to essentially be pushed back the three weeks school has been pushed back so far. With all this uncertainty it is probable that the season will be significantly cut or cancelled.

AZ HS football head coaches are requesting the AIA significantly examine a start date to be in the spring of the 2021 semester. There are a number of reasons this consideration is in the best practice for students, parents, coaches and school communities:

- **Safety and Guidelines.** Schools, colleges and professional sport organizations are yet to figure out a method to follow guidelines and procedures ensuring the safety of everyone. Coaches are not health professionals that are prepared to lead this front. Resources and assistance in these areas are so complex we will be unable to determine if our methods are effective until someone or their family is a victim.
- **Providing the full experience of the sport.** It has been over four months since many coaches have seen their players face to face. Friday night games are great but they are not everything to the experience. These students have already lost four months, soon to be five, and giving them a few games is simply not enough.
- **Increased time for players to get college attention.** AZ HS football will send hundreds of players to college and continue their education and future in the sport. All high school players this season have missed out on spring recruiting, spring showcases, summer college camps and overall lack of assistance to develop their skills. Having a spring season will give these juniors and seniors an opportunity for college coaches to see them face to face and on the field.
- **Official shortage.** We understand there will be hurdles to overcome but officials are here for the kids and not the check just like coaches. Moving lower level games to Saturdays or providing double header lower level games can help accommodate officials that will be at other sports
- **Multi-Sport Athletes.** We recognize that many schools have multi-sport athletes that are essential to their programs and this will put a strain on them. This we cannot deny but would argue that it is better to give students a choice versus making the decision for them by cancelling games or possibly a season.
- **Give school districts time to formulate and execute a plan.** We are about four weeks from when schools are to open in person and many districts have not released a plan for the upcoming year. Most certainly they have not executed or tested the plan to see it is effective. Saying we are going to start athletics the same day schools open in person is unrealistic. Many coaches have not had much communication with their district leaders that are making these decisions because they simply do not have time to consider athletics with the weight of the school year starting in a month.
- **Avoiding drastic district decisions to cancel or keep.** We have seen districts already say that they have cancelled fall sport participation. The AIA stated in their fall plan on July 10th that it will be determined by the district to deem if they feel safe to allow fall sports. Forcing districts to make this decision now will have several choose on the side of caution. This will of course be devastating to those schools but also affect other schools who will have trouble finding games. Not to mention we will see a mass transfer of athletes to schools who are allowing fall sports.
- **Collaborating with spring coaches/sports.** It was devastating to witness the cancellation of spring sports last year. We understand the inconvenience to have more sports going on in the spring and will be very accommodating to the traditional spring sports. Moving practice locations and times are just a few of the obstacles we know we will have to work around.

As we have seen other states moving to a model that moves fall sports to the spring, we are hoping to be a part of the bold and difficult decision to do the same. It will require more work from all stakeholders but we are doing this for children and thus will do whatever it takes. Thank you for your consideration.

Dustin Peace – Canyon Del Oro High School Head Football Coach
Corey Noble – Walden Grove High School Head Football Coach
Pat Nugent - Cienega High School Head Football Coach
Jorge Mendivil – Amphitheater High School Head Football Coach
Louie Ramirez - Marana High School Head Football Coach
Glenn Posey - Sunnyside High School Head Football Coach
James Hardy- Ironwood Ridge High School Head Football Coach
Scott McKee - Sahuaro High School Head Football Coach
Justin Argraves - Tucson High School Head Football Coach
Matt Johnson - Marana Mountain View High School Head Football Coach
Robert Bonillas - Desert View High School Head Football Coach
Todd Hanley - Flagstaff High School Head Football Coach
Brian Walker - Tempe High School Head Football Coach
Don Watt - Sahuarita High School Head Football Coach
Mike Wells - Palo Verde High School Head Football Coach
George Kelly - Empire High School Head Football Coach
Ryan McBrayer - Sabino High School Head Football Coach
Rudy Olvera - Mohave High School Head Football Coach
Bryan Bega - Monument Valley Head Football Coach
Scott Hare - Mesquite High School Head Football Coach
Jake Teyechea- Nogales High School Head Football Coach
Derek Zellner ~ Gilbert High School Head Football Coach
Hunter Long - Douglas High School Head Football Coach
Pete Delgado - Baboquivari High School Head Football Coach
Will Babb-Peoria High School Head Football Coach
Matt Nalette - Thunderbird High School Head Football Coach
Dana Zupke - Pinnacle High School Head Football Coach
Chris Semore - Vista Grande High School Head Football Coach
Jon Castellanos-Odyssey Institute head football coach
Michael Hudnutt-Cactus Shadows Head Football Coach
Aaron Walls - Apollo High School Head Football Coach
Ty Wisdom - Horizon High School Head Football Coach
Tony Stillings - Heritage Academy Head Football Coach
Stephen Hogg - Raymond S. Kellis Head Football Coach
Vincent J. Lee - Tuba City HS Head Football Coach