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03 MHSAA Council Reinstates 2020 Football Season; Full Fall Competition Schedule Authorized

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EAST LANSING, Mich. – Sept. 3 – The Fall 2020 football season has been reinstated today by the Representative Council of the Michigan High School Athletic Association after Governor Gretchen Whitmer's Executive Order 176 lifted restrictions that previously did not allow the sport to be played.

Whitmer's executive order also allows for an immediate start of competition boys soccer; Lower Peninsula girls swimming & diving and girls volleyball on Wednesday (Sept. 9) for schools located in Regions 1-5 and 7 based on the MI Safe Start Plan. It also sets spectator limits of two per participant for outdoor and indoor events in Phase 4 of the MI Safe Start Plan.

Statewide football, and competition in those regions for volleyball, soccer and swimming & diving, had been restricted as part of EO 160, which ordered gyms and pools to remain closed and required social distancing in competition to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in areas under Phase 4 of the Safe Start plan.

Schools in Regions 6 and 8 have been able to play volleyball, soccer and swim because those regions have been under fewer restrictions while in Phase 5 of the reopening process.

The MHSAA's Council had authorized on Aug. 20 the start of competition in volleyball, soccer and swim statewide, pending the authorization of that activity in the specific regions by Whitmer's office. The Council also on Aug 14. postponed the Fall 2020 football season to Spring 2021, but voted today to allow for a shortened season this fall.

Schools are not required to play any of those sports this fall, and may postpone until the spring. However, the MHSAA will conduct its postseason events in those four sports only for the Fall 2020 season.

"We are thankful for the opportunity for kids to get back on the field in all fall sports, and we appreciate Governor Whitmer providing that opportunity with Executive Order 176 ," MHSAA Executive Director Mark Uyl said. "We share the Governor's priorities of putting health and safety first, and the COVID-19 guidance and protocols designed by the MHSAA at her request have led to the safe starts in all sports across the state.

"Thirty three other states are currently participating in all fall sports, and the MHSAA and its member schools are committed to doing this as safely as possible. We are ready to again provide those experiences to students and communities that have hoped for a return of some normalcy. Given the challenges of online education in many school districts across the state, providing sports and a daily routine may be more important than ever in motivating students and providing a safe outlet for physical activity, competition and socialization."

Football teams previously had been allowed to practice in helmets only during the traditional first week of practice, which began Aug. 10, and then during Council-approved offseason "contact" days beginning Aug. 24. With the reinstatement of this fall's season, football teams must cease all activity until Tuesday, Sept. 8, then practice two days in helmets and shoulder pads before adding full pads Sept. 10.

They may begin regular-season games Sept. 18, and will play six games beginning with their originally-scheduled Week 4 contests. All football teams in 11 and 8-player football will qualify for the playoffs during this fall's shortened season, and then advance through their usual postseason progression with 8-Player Finals the weekend of Nov. 27-28 and 11-Player Finals the weekend of Dec. 4-5.

All other Fall 2020 tournaments will be conducted as previously scheduled.

The MHSAA is a private, not-for-profit corporation of voluntary membership by more than 1,500 public and private senior high schools and junior high/middle schools which exists to develop common rules for athletic eligibility and competition. No government funds or tax dollars support the MHSAA, which was the first such association nationally to not accept membership dues or tournament entry fees from schools. Member schools which enforce these rules are permitted to participate in MHSAA tournaments, which attract more than 1.4 million spectators each year.

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