

When the Dust Settles

Constant Changes Cause Everyone to Scramble

If you have ever ridden a roller coaster, it is not only an up-and-down ride, but there are times you want to throw up.

That might best describe sports in this new Covid life we live.

Although there are several states who have played high school sports, we have not and the likelihood of that happening is not good.

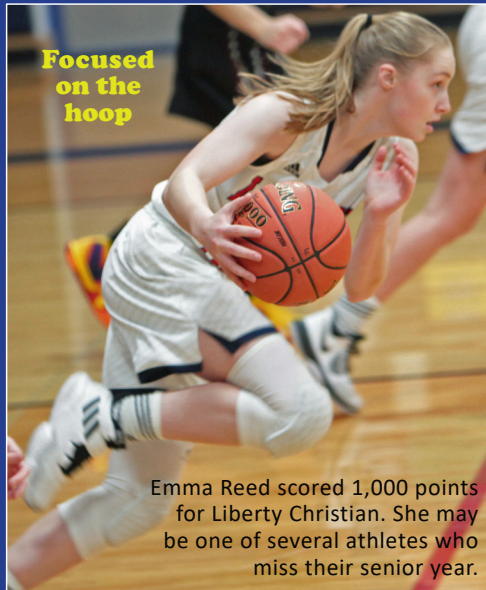
Under Governor Inslee's new regional plan, it is like throwing a grenade in a smoldering fire and complicates a new re-start plan once again.

Just as we learn the rules, set goals to meet them and start planning for either practice to start or games to play, we have to toss our ideas into the dumpster, grab a piece of paper and start over with new guidelines.

As the WIAA Executive Board was about to meet to discuss the possibility of a February start date, Gov. Inslee rolled out a new plan that caught everyone with their pants down.

Because the WIAA had a lack of information, but had to roll out a plan, they voted to move fall sports to Feb. 1, leap-frogging winter sports which had been scheduled for that date.

The reasoning is that basketball and wrestling



Emma Reed scored 1,000 points for Liberty Christian. She may be one of several athletes who miss their senior year.

were Phase 3 sports (*Which has not been defined yet.*) and it would be too early to start spring sports, which is suspected to start after fall sports ends on March 21.

Fall sports includes football, slowpitch softball, girl's soccer, swim and dive along with volleyball.

The approaching date has people scrambling for solutions and it appears that if sports are played, there will be no state championships, doubtful regional championships and perhaps no league standings.

Because several leagues span across different counties and the new "Covid Regional" areas, there is a possibility that one region may be meeting Gov. Inlee's new metrics,

while another does not. That complicates matters even more.

For example, the **South Central** region which includes Kittitas County, Yakima County, the Tri-Cities, Walla Walla and Columbia County (Dayton) is in a position to not play until March due to high Covid numbers.

Yakima has the highest number of cases in the state and had an astounding 500+ count in two days this past week. Since it takes about three weeks for a region to be close to moving to Phase 2 due to the process, you can rule out fall sports starting by Feb. 1.

The data will be accessed each Friday by the Department of Health (who is actually making these decisions) and they will announce if a region can move into Phase 2.

In Phase 1, low to moderate sports (see next page) can practice but nobody can play games until Phase 2.

Currently, school officials all over Eastern Washington are scrambling for the possibilities of a high school sports season which could happen as early as this Friday.

Since there will be no state championships this year, there is little incentive for league

affiliations and the emphasis is on playing a local schedule only.

Complicating matters is travel and umpiring. There appears to be a shortage of both umpires and bus drivers which also puts middle school sports completely in doubt.

As a result of the new region metrics, the Big Nine has been split. Davis, Eisenhower, Sunnyside, West Valley are in the **South Central** region while Moses Lake, Wenatchee and Eastmont are in the **North Central** region.

The CWAC faces the same dilemma. Ellensburg, Selah, East Valley, Grandview and Prosser are in the South Central Region and will possibly schedule some games against Big Nine schools.

CWAC schools, Ephrata (**North Central**) and Othello (**East**) are in two separate regions and they could end up scrambling to find games.

Othello will probably play with the Greater Spokane League 2A which includes Clarkston and Pullman, while Ephrata will schedule games for basketball with the Big Nine area schools (Wenatchee, etc) plus Cashmere and Brewster, but football with possibly include Royal (have not decided their direction yet), and other area schools.

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PHASE 1

- **Low and Moderate sports are permitted to practice outdoors.**

- **Sports Include:** Softball, Baseball, Soccer, Tennis, Track, Cross-Country, Golf, etc. Football can practice only in pods.

Low Risk Sports Include:

Cross Country • Swim & Dive • Golf • Tennis • Track & Field • No-contact Cheer and Dance.

Moderate Risk Sports Include:

Baseball • Softball • Volleyball • Flag Football • Gymnastics • Bowling • Martial Arts

High Risk Sports Include:

Basketball • Football • Wrestling • Cheer leading with Contact • Martial Arts Competitions

PHASE 2

- **Low, moderate and high-risk sports competitions are allowed.** Maximum of 200 people which includes spectators.

- **Includes:** Outdoor sports, pools, outdoor personal training

FALL Feb. 1- Mar. 21)

- **Football, Slowpitch Softball, Cross Country, Girl's Soccer, Boy's Soccer (1B/2B), Girl's Swim & Dive, Volleyball, Golf, (Alternative Season), Tennis, (Alternative Season).**

- Individual schools/leagues/districts/regions have the option to request to move any sport or season as they deem appropriate for their local area.
- Proposals will be reviewed and approved by the WIAA Executive Director
- Spring and Winter seasons have not been defined yet but Spring is expected to follow fall.

The 1A SCAC East remain intact with Toppenish, Wapato, Zillah, Naches and La Salle but the West is undecided.

Royal and Wahluke are in different regions but Connell, Kiona Benton, College Place are in the same region as the Yakima Valley schools.

The 2B EWAC, also has some problems. Most of the schools fit into the same region (**South Central**), but Goldendale is in the **Southwest** which includes Vancouver's Clark County. Warden is in Grant County (**North Central**) which also poses a problem.

1B schools like Sunnyside Christian, Yakima Tribal and Riverside Christian also



play in a multi-regional league and they will be meeting on Tuesday, January 12 to discuss possibilities.

Expect schools to move

the fall start date from Feb 1 (possibly to Feb. 15 or 22) and to extend the sports calendar to late June.

The WIAA has allowed leagues and schools the flexibility to make adjustments as long as they contact their office and get approval.

However, there are two giant stumbling blocks. One is meeting the metrics, the other is approval by school districts to play sports, let alone practice.

At this point, all this planning maybe for nothing since the current metric numbers are so high.

A frustrating situation, at all levels from administrators to coaches and athletes to parents.

Tri-Cities Schools United

Contingency Plans in Place for Safe Start

One of the benefits of the Mid-Columbia Conference in the Tri-Cities is that most of the schools reside in Kennewick, Richland or Pasco.

Because all but one of their schools (Hermiston, Oregon) are in the **South Central** region, they have a sports plan with four different start dates.

The first target date for fall sports is Feb 1, then Feb 8, 15 & 22.

If the metrics do not allow them to play by late February, they may be forced to double up sports which Kamiakin athletic director, Casey Gant states, "Is not something we really want to do."

He added that although

their league is comprised of 4A and 3A schools and they have a large pool of athletes to choose from, there are some 3-sport athletes.

"If we make them choose," he said, "they may decided to specialize in just that one sport and the other two sports would lose them."

Unfortunately, if fall sports can't be started in February, that may happen at all levels across the state. It would really impact small schools who rely on several multi-sport athletes.

Gant added like most areas across the state, transportation could also be an issue, but with most of the schools in the Tri-Cities, they are in a better

situation than most.

Although it hasn't been decided upon yet, spring sports is expected to follow fall and winter sports will be last.

They are extending the MCC sports calendar to June 19 with a league tournament of some sort to cap the season.

The schedule is expected to be 70% of a normal league offering (for example 14 games rather than 20, etc.) and they are moving swim and dive to season three because the weather is better by May.

There will be a bye week for all schools which may allow flexibility in case a team has covid issues and cannot play.

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