

Wabash.

Date: January 19, 2021

To: Wabash Community

From: Matt Tanney, Director of Athletics and Campus Wellness

RE: Intercollegiate Athletics in the Spring Semester

As we begin a new semester at Wabash, intercollegiate athletics will take another step forward in returning to sport activities, marking nearly a full calendar year since the last athletics contest on campus, a 23-7 lacrosse victory on March 7, 2020. In July 2020, the North Coast Athletic Conference (NCAC) President's Council suspended all intercollegiate competition through December 31, 2020, and Wabash joined its NCAC peers and the majority of NCAA Division III athletics programs in pausing competition during the fall semester.

Little Giant teams deftly adapted and trained in masked and physically distanced workouts within small groups throughout the fall. Team activities required both creativity and frequent adjustments based on the health of students and the prevalence of COVID in the community. Wabash coaches strategically implemented workouts with a shared commitment to health and safety at the forefront of all training sessions.

Unlike the fall semester, athletes this semester will participate in a robust, weekly testing program informed by the NCAA's *Resocialization of Collegiate Sport* Guidelines. Every athlete will be tested a minimum of once per week, which exceeds the NCAA's testing recommendations in almost every sport. Coaches and staff, such as athletic trainers, who closely interact with athletes, are defined as "Tier 1" personnel by NCAA guidelines and are also included in weekly testing.

Starting on January 11, varsity teams began to repopulate campus as part of a staggered re-entry plan. As a condition of returning to campus, athletes submitted a negative PCR test through the CVS "Return Ready" testing program. Upon arrival to campus, each athlete received a second PCR test. Any athletes testing positive are required to isolate, and close contacts are quarantined in accordance with the College's established protocols. Similar to the overall Wabash student population, athletes that previously tested positive for the virus are excluded from testing due to the medical evidence related to immunity in the months following infection.

Supported by the regimented testing program, teams will resume training sessions in January and February, with competitions scheduled for later this month. Sports that can mask without material disruption to the sport, *e.g.*, volleyball, will continue to mask during training and competition. Although it is not possible for all athletes to physically distance and mask during every sport activity, such variance in the structure of workouts and competition is not a disregard for the important mitigation measures necessary to reduce the spread of the virus. All sport programs, at the direction of each head coach, will continue to follow physical distancing and masking measures consistent with sport activity.

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Little Giant teams will only compete against other institutions with shared values on health, safety, and adherence to NCAA testing strategies. Schedules for winter sports and fall sports competing in the spring remain abbreviated and will operate with maximum flexibility. Often, more than one competition may be scheduled with the same opponent. Upcoming basketball weekends with DePauw and Denison on a Thursday and Saturday, home-and-away format, are two examples of this scheduling philosophy. Optimism abounds for expanded spring sport competitions, bolstered by additional outdoor activities and more favorable weather conditions. Planning and conversations continue on adjusted schedules and formats for spring sports.

Team travel will be limited and sports will not travel overnight for competition, except in unique situations such as NCAA championships. The Healthy Campus Task Force is assisting our planning efforts for on-campus athletics competitions. More information will be shared in the coming weeks on spectator guidelines and related details.

As Wabash athletes, coaches, and staff continue to adapt to training and competition in this unique environment, we are hopeful that resuming competitive opportunities will provide students an opportunity to enhance both their physical and mental health in the upcoming semester.

Any questions on the Little Giants Athletics program and our continuing return to sport plans may be directed to tanneym@wabash.edu.

Wabash Always Fights!