



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 27, 2021

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Section One Executive Committee supports the authorization of “high-risk” sports

HARRISON, N.Y. — On Wednesday, January 27, 2021, the Executive Committee of Section One, Inc., of the New York State Public High School Athletic Association (NYSPHSAA) convened for the second time this week to continue their discussion around the possible authorization of “high-risk” sports.

On January 22, 2021, the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) released Interim Guidance for Sports and Recreation during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency. This guidance states: *“Effective February 1, 2021, participants in higher risk sports and recreation activities may partake in individual or distanced group training and organized no/low contact group training and, further, may partake in other types of play, including competition and tournament, only as permitted by the respective local health authorities (i.e., county health departments).”*

On behalf of the student-athletes, coaches and communities within Section One, a formal request was submitted to the Dutchess, Putnam, Rockland and Westchester County Executives and Commissioners of Health. This request advocated for the authorization of “high risk” sports effective February 1st. In response to the updated NYSDOH guidance, the Section One Executive Committee met Monday, January 25th to discuss and review the necessary steps toward obtaining authorization of “high-risk” sports. The importance of gathering concrete data and input from stakeholders quickly became identified as a top priority.

In collaboration with the Lower Hudson Council of School Superintendents (LHCSS), data was collected regarding the level of support for “high-risk” sports. At the January 27th Section One Executive Committee meeting, the Committee voted to approve the authorization of “high-risk” sports beginning February 1st, pending authorization from local county departments of health.



Through weeks of preparation for the hopeful authorization of “high-risk” sports, two emerging themes evolved. The majority of Athletic Directors reported wanting to minimize the impact on the spring season and to limit any overlap between seasons. The Section One COVID Task Force identified these themes through discussion and planning with Athletic Directors and Sport Chairs.

As a result, the Section One Executive Committee approved the following condensed season calendar inclusive of regionalized championship events for the “high-risk” winter season, where permissible.

- “High-Risk” Winter Season: February 1st – March 14th
- Fall Season II: March 8th – April 25th
- Spring: April 19th – June 13th

“This is an exciting step toward some sense of normalcy for all student-athletes in Section One. We acknowledge and value the benefits that school-based sports bring to the overall educational experience”, said Section One Executive Director Todd Santabarbara. “We will be focused on supporting our student-athletes and their safe participation in these sports”.

As always, local school districts can choose not to participate in some or all sport offerings and/or may reposition sports outside of their defined season to meet the needs of their districts.

In an effort to provide a safe and sustainable experience for our student-athletes, the Executive Committee also determined that no spectators will be permitted at indoor “high-risk” sporting events. Recognizing the importance of the sports experience for our athletes and their families, each school will have the ability to designate one senior night, per sport, where two spectators per home player will be permitted. “High-risk” outdoor sporting events will follow the Section’s previously established guidelines, permitting two spectators per home player.

The Section One Executive Committee remains focused on the health and safety of the student-athletes throughout the Lower Hudson Valley and reserves the right to amend the sports season calendar during this ever-changing climate. In addition, the Committee will continue to monitor any further guidance released from the local county DOH, NYSDOH, NYSPHSAA and NYSED and is committed to adhering to all established protocols and procedures.

The Center for Interscholastic Athletics, a division of Southern Westchester BOCES, serves 82 high schools in Dutchess, Putnam, Rockland, and Westchester counties, providing support with the organization and management of athletic programs. Section One is part of the New York State Public High School Athletic Association Inc., a non-profit organization that provides equitable and safe competition for the students of public, private and parochial member schools.

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