***NWAC Principles for Return to Compete***

Ever since the COVID-19 epidemic first hit in Everett, Washington, NWAC has worked on a variety of levels to provide the best information possible. When putting out information and/or making decisions we have held to the principles of being thoughtful, timely, and not rushing into decisions.

As the COVID-19 continues to evolve around us and discussions are picking up about the resumption of collegiate athletics, NWAC will need to continue its flexibility in responding to and planning for our future and return to competition. Following are some guiding principles for the NWAC as we entertain one day going back to college campuses and our student-athletes compete once again.

It is the NWAC’s hope that these principles will provide guidance as the conference resumes competition, encounters non-traditional obstacles, and provides consistency as NWAC enters into a new realm.

***NWAC Competition Principles:***

* **Answer questions today so as to not create problems tomorrow.**

The safety of NWAC student-athletes, coaches, and staff members is paramount as competition begins. A wise and thorough strategy when starting fall and winter sports is a necessary step, including as best we can, prevent canceling sports after restarting. Answer questions today so as to not create problems for tomorrow.

* **Prevention matters.**

In working with athletic trainers and college administrators it is important that we follow health mandates as established by local and state health authorities.

* **Preparation to respond or to react.**

We need to understand the reality of when NWAC competition starts back up a coach, student-athlete, administrator, or game management will contract COVID-19. Consistent communication and safety protocols will need to be in place at our member institutions so they can adequately address the situation and inform persons who were in contact with the individual who tested positive.

* **What we have today, we most likely will have tomorrow.**

Since early March, COVID-19 has reared itself and for all intents and purposes, will be here to stay. It caused us to cancel sports in the fall and it will cause us to be hyper concerned about having protocols in place to keep facilities, transportation, equipment, and supplies clean. Cleaning protocols need to be thorough, consistent, practical, and dynamic. Many indicators point to another wave of COVID-19 striking in the upcoming month. NWAC and member colleges will need to be flexible, cooperative, and accommodating as schedules, travel, and championships will be affected. It is the type of cooperation that focuses on selflessness and what is in the best interest of the majority.

* **Investing in solid stock.**

When it comes to scheduling region play and conference championships are and will continue to be the priority. We will continue to do our best to preserve region contests and our championships. Though travel, formats, and venues may differ from their original intent, what does not differ is the priority and significance of region play and championship events.

* **All things are not equal.**

As part of a five-state partnership, we need to be aware that when the stay at home order is lifted, it may or may not happen at the same time for all five states. It may not happen at the same time for our three states and our friends in British Columbia. Caution needs to be taken that a real possibility exists that not all member colleges will be delivering academic programs, athletic events, and allowing fans on campus in the same manner and at the same time. Realize NWAC may look quite different when competition comes back.

COVID-19 will control when member colleges can host public events on campus. State and local authorities will follow suit. It is imperative that NWAC manage obstacles as they arise such as limitations of attendance, opening of facilities, etc. In order to maintain the integrity of the conference, NWAC needs to have the ability to work with member colleges on possibly switching home sites to get contests completed.

* **Remaining consistent with all around is inconsistent.**

It is quite likely it will not be smooth sailing if and when athletics resume. Disruptions and cancelations to both academic and athletic offerings, schedules, and operations will most likely happen. In earlier times, one issue may not have affected the other. Presently and in the future, it is quite possible a disruption on the academic side of the house may affect athletics and vice versa. Regardless, member colleges must be consistent and committed to not seek any competitive or financial advantage at the expense of other member colleges.