

Ivy League Reinforces Its Commitment to Student-Athlete Safety With Cancellation of Fall Sports Amid COVID-19 Spikes

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Once again, the Ivy League has sent a loud and clear message regarding COVID-19 to the college community. The Ivy League presidents have cancelled all intercollegiate sports until at least January, becoming the first Division I conference to officially suspend its fall semester football schedule in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic.

The league has reserved its decision on the potential impact of the pandemic on winter and spring sports schedules, except it has confirmed that no intercollegiate sports activity would begin until at least January 1, 2021. Ivy League Executive Director Robin Harris stated that even though a decision on potentially moving fall sports to the spring has not been made, “there won’t be basketball games or hockey games or other sports in the fall.” This delayed start date would essentially eliminate the non-conference schedule for all Ivy League men’s and women’s basketball programs even if health and safety concerns regarding COVID-19 are reduced and the sports programs are able to resume.

The league’s announcement of the fall sports cancellation follows its controversial decision on March 10th to become the first NCAA conference to cancel its men’s and women’s basketball tournaments. Despite broad criticism for overreacting from multiple professional leagues and other college conferences for its preemptive decision, within days

the Ivy League and its Executive Director Harris were lauded for her decision to exercise extreme caution to protect the league’s student-athletes from COVID-19.

Approximately two days after the Ivy League’s decision all professional sports leagues were shut down following the COVID-19 diagnosis of NBA player Rudy Gobert and the NCAA was forced to cancel the men’s and women’s NCAA tournaments.

The decision to cancel fall sports followed weeks of discussion in an effort to make a potential schedule of competition work for all of the Ivy League schools and their student-athletes.. Following Harvard, Yale and Princeton’s decision to limit the number of undergraduate students on campus for the fall semester, it made the opportunity to continue this fall’s athletic schedules more impractical.

Princeton President Christopher Eisgruber commented that

“athletics is part of the broader educational mission and not treated differently from the rest of the academic enterprise. Our athletes are first and foremost students.”

Executive Director Harris added that the league had considered numerous options to try and make athletic competition work, but school restrictions and state rules on the size of gathering prevailed, resulting in this “sad decision.”

While this announcement may not be followed by similar announcements from larger Power 5 football conferences, other mid-major conferences may follow the Ivy League’s lead as the Coronavirus continues to spike across the country.

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