



Ohio High School Athletic Association

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An Open Letter to The Student-Athletes & Communities In Ohio Affected by the COVID-19 Issue

Today marks a day that I never thought would occur. Every day our staff comes to work to make opportunities available to you knowing the ultimate goal is a 'state championship'. While the emotions you have gone through hearing the news today of our remaining winter sport tournaments being canceled are challenging, we understand what you are going through.

We know what was denied you. We know what your dreams and goals are. It is emotional. We know the welcome back from District and Regional titles or the school pep rally for the state qualifier are all denied. We know how your parents, teammates, friends and coaches have instilled in you that "work hard and good things will happen". Today, you are also realizing one of the best virtues taught in athletics – dealing with adversity. Adversity has been brought on by an enemy that very few ever expected. You have been asked by your coaches and teachers to look at 'Teamwork' in an entirely different way. Now, I am asking you to do the same...to be the leaders we KNOW you are to help defeat an opponent that is more formidable than any our generation has competed against.

You've been denied something that you have worked so hard for. But because of your commitment, those behind you WILL have that opportunity again. Because of YOU. And while there may not be a medal around your neck or a trophy in the trophy case that says "2020 State Champions", I can't help but being reminded of the message that every player has been told at one time or another:

"it's amazing what can be accomplished when no one cares who gets the credit".

Yes, we are the ones that made the decision to end the chance to compete for state titles. We take that responsibility seriously and know that it was a decision that had to be made. But now, we are asking all of our student-athletes to come together for a bigger reason, to help defeat this enemy, to be teammates across the great state. Do it because it is the right thing to do. Because together, we CAN accomplish it. And it may be the greatest accomplishment you will ever achieve without being rewarded a medal. But, I can assure you, you will have as much pride in what WE have accomplished than anything you have accomplished. The student-athletes behind you will be forever grateful for the sacrifice you are making.

To the Communities Across Ohio: This crisis has brought to the forefront how important high school athletics are. Tournament success in high school sports bring communities together like nothing else can. Togetherness, support, pride and celebrations of success are all reflected in the success that high school student-athletes achieve. In small communities and large communities alike, communities come out in great numbers to show appreciation for the success our student-athletes achieve. When this crisis ends, and it will, I am hopeful that our communities will find a way to do what they would have done coming back from a regional or state tournament – show their support for what they were denied. It is an appreciation they will pass on to those behind them. They may need that now more than ever. I appreciate your help and support.