



CLUB SPORTS ADAPT TO COVID-19

The Ultimate Frisbee club practices Mondays and Wednesdays from 6:30 to 8 p.m. Photo by J. Harvard Feldhouse/The Jambar

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Youngstown State University club sports are eager to hit the field again after COVID-19 cut their spring season short. The club sports administration implemented several new safety measures designed to minimize health risks while maximizing playing potential.

The new club sports rules go beyond simply wearing a mask and staying six feet apart. Club sports banned in-person competition and travel, and club meetings outside of practice must be conducted virtually or not at all.

Practice is still permitted by the university, but clubs need to implement certain restrictions and extra steps in advance. Domonique Sak, coordinator of club sports and summer camps, described the new rules in an email.

Most significantly, the club sports administration created practice “pods” that make contact tracing easier. If a student tests positive for COVID-19, the administration uses records to contact any teammates the infected student interacted with.

“Clubs will have sign-up sheets to determine ‘pods,’ or groups of members that will practice together at all times. In addition to pods, the clubs will have to be aware of their space and are encouraged to divide the fields or courts into sections,” Sak said. “Outside practices have a range of 11 to 15 people per pod, per section. Inside practices have a range

of six to 10 people per pod, per section. Coaches are included in this headcount.”

In addition to the pods, each club’s safety officers monitor teammates’ temperatures, overall health and adherence to the rules.

Practices must be contactless. Full-contact sports like lacrosse, rugby and soccer have to adapt their practices to have more skills-based and conditioning activities or find creative ways to keep the competition spirit alive.

Mark McKenzie, senior physics and astronomy major, is the president of the men’s lacrosse club and fundraising chair for Club Sports Council. He said contactless practices may take some time to get used to, the team will benefit in the long run.

“In lacrosse, we’re going to be doing a lot of passing drills, shooting drills and a lot of conditioning, that’s for sure. It’s just the small stuff, but all that small stuff builds up and it definitely makes a huge difference,” McKenzie said.

McKenzie believes the club sports athletes will follow any rule to get back on the field.

“I think everybody’s pretty much been cooped up inside for the past couple months,” he said. “We’re ready just to get out and at least be able to see each other in person, as well as being able to pass the ball around and being able to actually sweat on a soccer field or football field.”

Niki Spencer, junior business administration major and

president of the tennis club, does not think the rules will be hard for her club to adjust to. The tennis club, which was created right before YSU shut down last semester, worries less about contact.

“That’s not an issue at all, just like having to sanitize or spray the balls after. Everyone has their own racket,” Spencer said. “We don’t have a normal sort of way of practicing yet, so this is actually kind of good. We don’t have to transition; we’re just going in as a fresh new club, trying to do it during [the coronavirus pandemic].”

Team recruitment efforts this fall concerned many club sports teams. However, both McKenzie and Spencer were pleasantly surprised with the amount of interest and engagement at the organization fair last Tuesday.

“I actually got more people than I thought I’d get. I didn’t realize how many people are interested in playing or how many people have played before. It was interesting to see all the people that decided to scan in,” Spencer said.

Students interested in participating in a club sport this semester should reach out to club presidents or Domonique Sak to file contact and health information before joining.

“I’m excited to just see everyone playing, seeing everyone enjoy sports,” Spencer said. “It’s nice to see the amount of people that want to play and are interested, even when coronavirus is going on. It’s nice to see people still want to play sports and still be a part of it.”