

## FS Athletics Committee Meeting – 09/28/2020

Attending: James Williams, Bonnie Ownley, James Chyz, Andrew Donovan, Matt Harris, Katy Locke, Harrison Meadows, Chris Parigger, Joe Scogin, Aaron Smith, Sylvia Trendafilova, and Jason McVeigh

The FS Athletics Committee met with Jason McVeigh, Director of Sports Medicine, to learn about measures that had been developed by the Athletics Department to protect student-athletes (SA) and Athletics Department personnel from Covid-19.

- In April, the Athletics Department formed small task forces to develop procedures based on guidance from the TN Department of Health, Center for Disease Control (CDC), National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), and the Southeastern Conference (SEC).
- In June/July, SA who played fall sports, such as football returned to campus. In August, other SA returned.
- Athletics personnel explained to SA about the new changes and what to expect before the SA returned to campus. During the first few days back, the SA worked with athletic trainers and the focus was on medical (Covid-19 antibody testing, fitness tests). Many discussions were held and all meetings were virtual.
- Students were given FAQ sheets, advised of flow patterns in the building, signage was posted, and masks were mandated. Entry into buildings required screening for temperature. Weight room equipment was well-spaced and was cleaned after each use.
- The Athletics Department has a full-time head team physician (Dr. Chris Klenck), who serves on the SEC task force, and works with Dr. Spencer Gregg (UTK Student Health Center Director). Dr. Klenck follows Knox County Covid-19 restrictions. The Student Health Center does contact tracing and testing for symptomatic students and those in close contact with students and employees who have tested positive.
- Sports have been categorized as high, moderate, or low risk of exposure to Covid-19. The high-risk sports are football, soccer, and basketball.
- All SA at greater risk due to health conditions like asthma have been identified and are watched more closely.

Discussion followed on what they had learned during the process.

- In the early days (April), they used the rapid tests, but found that they gave false positive results so they switched to PCR tests, which take longer to get results, but are more reliable.
- Flexibility with the plan is necessary.
- Surface cleaning is not as important as masks and social distancing. Temperatures are not as important, but whether you have a sense of smell/taste is critical.
- Majority of SA have been asymptomatic.
- There are potential long-term cardiac issues from Covid-19; this is due to inflammation. They test SA with EKG and check troponin levels to detect heart injury. This is required by the SEC.
- Social events are a problem, but SA are not getting infected during workouts.

- Some SA have resorted to protecting friends by changing their answers during contact tracing.
- Testing for Covid-19 is very expensive, but the SEC is paying for it. Cleaning supplies are also expensive and the Athletics Department has worked to trim other costs.
- To minimize personal contacts, all groups went through training on a facility flow plan.
- The number of tests an SA has is based on whether their sport is categorized as low, medium, or high risk. Those in high risk sports have 3 tests per week, moderate have 1 test per week and low risk sports, which are played outdoors, are tested as needed.
- The mental health team is embedded with students. There is a large range of how seriously SA take it. SA can opt out of playing their sport and keep their scholarship for 2 semesters. Isolation can create problems.
- NCAA ruling - If you have a positive antibody test, then you do not have to be tested for 90 days, which they extended to a full semester. But what happens when you do not have evidence that the SA was infected, and what if the antibodies detected were for a different coronavirus? For these reasons, they continue to test unless they can verify that the SA had Covid-19.
- It is not known whether organs other than the heart can be affected long-term. However, the lungs decondition quickly.
- The Athletics Department is not involved in developing procedures for safety of spectators. This falls under the auspices of Event Management. The SEC has a task force associated with it. There is a focus on messaging and signage.