

Towns County Sports

Towns County's Leader In Sports

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Softball: GHSA mandates physical distancing, masks optional

By Todd Forrest
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Sports Editor

Thomaston - The Georgia High School Association (GHSA) recently published a list of safety measures for the upcoming fall fast-pitch softball season.

The GHSA's "Special Considerations and Rules Modifications" were released July 8 to apprise softball programs of the new criteria to be enforced by the host school at each contest.

The updated regulations are "designed to decrease potential exposure to respiratory droplets by encouraging social distancing, limiting participation in administrative tasks to essential personnel and allowing for appropriate protective equipment during practice and competition," the statement reads on the GHSA's official website.

Some significant changes fans can expect to see this fall is the prohibition of public concession stands and mandatory social-distancing by spectators in the bleachers and at facility entrances.

Non-participating players must also adhere to social-distancing guidelines, resulting in an extension of the dugouts to a clearly-marked "out-of-play" area.

The rule changes also impact on-field interaction. Most notably, players are no longer allowed to leave the dugout to celebrate home runs.

All team huddles must abide by physical-distancing protocols, and charged defensive conferences will be conducted on the outer edge of the pitching circle. Pitchers are prohibited from licking fingers, touching any part of their hands to the mouth, or blowing into their hands before delivering a pitch. Any violation is in an immediate "dead ball" with the ball removed from play. The defensive team will provide another game ball, and the pitcher's hand must be sanitized



Kennedy Henson during a game in 2019. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

before continuing. Although not required, the GHSA advocates that players use their own gloves and bats as much as possible. All equipment is to be sanitized before and after each game/practice. Meanwhile, the sharing of beverages, water bottles and the use of sunflower seeds are strictly prohibited.

Long gone are the days of heated in-your-grill arguments between coaches and umpires. If a coach requests a timeout to discuss a call, they must maintain six-feet of separation at all times - this also applies to scorekeepers during substitutions.

The pregame conference is limited to one coach from each team and the officials. Coaches must remain outside the batter's box nearest their dugout, and umpires will stay behind the catcher's box to exchange lineup cards.

Base coaches will maintain physical distancing to base runners. The plate umpire shall position themselves deeper than usual to call balls and strikes. Base umpires shall maintain

physical distancing from any players in their starting positions and during rotations. Additionally, the catcher and batter must keep their distance while the umpire dusts off home plate.

With most of the regular season scheduled to occur in late-summer, cloth masks are recommended but not mandatory for players, coaches and officials. However, umpires are encouraged to wear face shields and sanitation gloves.

If a player elects to wear a face covering, they must be of a single color, without symbols or lettering. Yellow-tinted masks worn by pitchers are prohibited. Clear plastic face shields are permitted if integrated into the fielding facemask, catching helmet, or batting helmet.

The GHSA Board of Trustees met on Monday to further discuss the fall sports season. As of press time, official softball practice is slated to begin Aug. 1, with Aug. 6 listed as the earliest possible game date.

GHSA approves use of football helmets; Board of Trustees weigh options for fall

By Todd Forrest
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Sports Editor

Thomaston - The Georgia High School Association (GHSA) continues to inch forward, approving helmet use during summer football workouts beginning Monday, July 20.

The decision followed the July 15 meeting between the GHSA and the Sports Medicine Advisory Council. However, this next step doesn't come without limitations. Each player must be issued a helmet, and schools must sanitize the headgear before and after each workout.

Furthermore, the GHSA requests that schools continue reporting all positive COVID-19 cases. Reports must disclose the test date, the athlete or coach's name and their sport.

The GHSA is also providing schools will valuable resources and directions regarding the sanitation of composite leather, PU leather, and leather Wilson football care.

All other football regulations remain in effect at this time.



The GHSA Board of Trustees met at 1 p.m. Monday to discuss the opening of fall sports.

Before the meeting, cross country, softball and volleyball practice was slated to begin Aug. 1, with football conditioning underway on July 27. (For additional information, visit the GHSA's website at www.ghsa.net. Any alterations to

the current schedule will post on social media via the Towns County Herald.)

In national sports news, Virginia recently postponed its high school football season until the spring, but the remaining fall sports are still on schedule. Meanwhile, other southern states like Florida and Tennessee have delayed the start of football until September.

NASCAR 2020

By Gerald Hodges/the Racing Reporter

Childress Teams Finish 1-2 At Texas

FT. WORTH, TX - Austin Dillon came out of the pits first in the last round of pit stops then held off rookie teammate Tyler Reddick on Sunday at Texas to get his first victory of the NASCAR Cup Series season, and give Richard Childress Racing its first 1-2 finish in nine years.

"Not bad for a silver spoon kid," said Dillon. "We knew a win was coming. This team has been getting better and better. We could just feel it. Now, that we've made the cut and in the Chase hunt, there won't be quite as much pressure."

"I was more worried about Tyler than the other guys. I knew he had a car just about equal to me, and if I made one slip, he would be on me."

It was his first win at the 1.5-mile Fort Worth track and third of his Cup Series career.

Reddick led five laps and came home in second place, taking the checkered flag .149 seconds behind Dillon.

"Well, I had the gas pedal down, but I think my teammate was running a little better line," said Reddick. "I wanted the end to be between our teams. I didn't want any of the other cars involved."

Joey Logano was third, followed by, Kyle Busch, Kevin Harvick, Erik Jones, Ryan Blaney, Kurt Busch, Brad Keselowski, and Aric Almirola.

Denny Hamlin led 11 laps, had a fast car, but spun out seven laps from the finish and wound up finishing 20th.

If it weren't for bad luck, Jimmie Johnson would not have any luck. He spun during lap 121, hit the wall, and finished 26th.

Ryan Blaney won the first two stages of the race and led 150 laps of the 334 lap race.

The beginning of the final stage got off to a bad start. During Lap 218, race leader Blaney got loose going through Turn 4, causing the field behind him to stack up. As drivers tried to avoid wrecking, at least 11 other cars were involved. The race was red flagged for 12 minutes.

Blaney was fast, but a decision to stay out on Lap 246 as other drivers like Kevin Harvick and Joey Logano pitted ended up hurting him.

Top-10 leaders: 1. Harvick-721, 2. Blaney-630, 3. Keselowski-615, 4. Logano-607, 5. Elliott-604, 6. Hamlin-578, 7. Truex Jr.-557, 8. Almirola-534, 9. Kurt Busch-533, 10. Kyle Busch-520.

CINDRIC DECLARED WINNER IN TEXAS XFINITY RACE

Kyle Busch took the checkered flag in Saturday's Xfinity Series race at Texas, but his car failed a post-race inspection and he was placed last. The win went to runner-up Austin Cindric.

Top-10 finishers: 1. Austin Cindric, 2. Chase Briscoe, 3. Justin Allgaier, 4. Harrison Burton, 5. Michael Annett, 6. Jeb Burton, 7. Brandon Jones, 8. Justin Haley, 9. Ross Chastain, 10. Brandon Brown.

Top-10 leaders: 1. Briscoe-691, 2. Cindric-667, 3. Gragson-643, 4. Chastain-614, 5. Haley-550, 6. Allgaier-545, 7. H. Burton-536, 8. Annett-481, 9. B. Jones-448, 10. Herbst-377.

TEXAS TRUCK RACE GOES TO "ROWDY" KYLE

Top-10 finishers: 1. Kyle Busch, 2. Christian Eckes, 3. Matt Crafton, 4. Stewart Friesen, 5. Brett Moffitt, 6. Tyler Ankrum, 7. Justin Haley, 8. Grant Enfinger, 9. Ben Rhodes, 10. Ross Chastain.

Top-10 leaders: 1. Hill-300, 2. Rhodes-278, 3. Creed-268, 4. Eckes-267, 5.



Chase Elliott Gets First All-Star Win

Smith-254, 6. Moffitt-253, 7. Enfinger-252, 8. Ankrum-248, 9. Gilliland-243, 10. Crafton-225.

ELLIOTT GETS FIRST ALL-STAR WIN

Chase Elliott held off Kyle Busch to get his first NASCAR All-Star Race win Wednesday night at Bristol Motor Speedway.

"There's nothing like Bristol," he said. "There's nothing like the lights here. There's nothing like racing here. I've never won here - what a race to do it. Just really proud of our team tonight and rebounding. We've had a really tough couple of weeks and just felt like we had kind of gotten off base and I felt like I was struggling."

Elliott led 60 of the 140 laps en route to the \$1.1 million paycheck. He and his father Bill Elliott along with Dale Earnhardt and Dale Earnhardt Jr., are the only father/son combinations to have won the All-Star event. Interestingly, Bill Elliott won the race when it was held in Atlanta and Chase's victory at Bristol are the only two times the event was held at a track other than Charlotte.

Kyle Busch had to settle for second and is still winless this season in the Cup Series.

"We're trying hard and we're running okay, but it seemed like we were mired in 10th place for much of that race tonight and the last couple of adjustments really helped us," Busch said. "Adam (Stevens) did a great job helping the car and making it better. You just have to keep going."

Matt DiBenedetto won the All-Star Open, and joined stage winners Aric Almirola and William Byron in clinching starting spots in the All-Star Race.

The final All-Star starting spot went to Clint Bowyer, who was the top eligible vote-getter in fan balloting. Both the All-Star race and All-Star Open were non-points events.

SUPERSTAR RACING EXPERIENCE COMING TO TV

Tony Stewart and Ray Evernham have signed a television deal for their new racing series, called Superstar Racing Experience or SRX.

The events will take place on short tracks, dirt tracks and maybe a road course. All will be broadcast on CBS and CBS All Access beginning in 2021.

The drivers will compete in a specialized car designed by Evernham for exclusive use in the Superstar Racing Xperience. Evernham envisions a car where driver talent is emphasized more than aerodynamics.

Even though Stewart and Evernham maintain that the SRX is not a competitor to NASCAR, the concept is essentially a love letter to fans disillusioned by the low horsepower, high downforce intermediate track racing product.



Austin Dillon

"We want the cars to rely on horsepower, not aerodynamics," Evernham said. "It relies on mechanical grip, driver ability, driver input, right? Steering wheel, pedals, things like that. Possible working with a crew chief to make a few changes."

"So as far as the technology of the car, the technological advancements would be obviously to help cover the show and have fans be able to enjoy it better. But we want a very basic race car that is really, again, about showing driver ability."

Racing Joke: Matt and his wife had prepared dinner for members of his family. The doorbell rang, and their little boy greeted his aunt with a big hug and said, "I'm glad to see you. Now maybe daddy will do the trick he has been promising to do."

The aunt was curious. "What trick is that?"

The little boy replied, "I heard daddy tell mommy that he would climb the walls if you came to visit us again."

Weekend Racing

Name the three drivers in the Texas Cup Series race that competed against Dale Earnhardt Sr. in that series.

Racing moves to the 1.5-mile Kansas Speedway for four NASCAR events next weekend.

Thurs., July 23; Cup Series race; Starting time: 7:30 PM ET; TV: NBCSN.

Fri., July 24; Truck Series race; Starting time: 7 PM ET; TV: FoxSports1.

Sat., July 25; Truck Series race; Starting time: 1:30 PM ET; TV: FoxSports1.

Sat., July 25; Xfinity Series race; Starting time: 5 PM ET; TV: NBCSN.

Racing Trivia Question: Kansas Speedway opened in 2001. Who won the first two Cup Series races?

Last Week's Question: Who was the 1960 NASCAR Series champion? Answer: Rex White. He lives in Atlanta and continues to make selected personal appearances.

Gerald Hodges is a syndicated NASCAR writer and author. His books may be viewed and ordered online at Amazon.com. You may contact him by e-mail at: hodges@race500.com.