

NCAA Tournaments To Be Held Without Fans Due To Spreading Coronavirus



The NCAA announced on Wednesday afternoon the upcoming men's and women's basketball tournaments will be held as scheduled but with no fans.

NCAA President Mark Emmert statement on limiting attendance at NCAA events:
<https://t.co/TIHHjldse5> pic.twitter.com/8I1HdceDfN

— NCAA (@NCAA) March 11, 2020

“The NCAA continues to assess the impact of COVID-19 in consultation with public health officials and our COVID-19 advisory panel. Based on their advice and my discussions with the NCAA Board of Governors, I have made the decision to conduct our upcoming championship events, including the Division I men's and women's basketball tournaments, with only essential staff and limited family attendance,” NCAA president Mark Emmert said in a statement. “While I understand how disappointing this is for all fans of our sports, my decision is based on the current understanding of how COVID-19 is progressing in the United States. This decision is in the best interest of public health, including that of coaches, administrators, fans and, most importantly, our student-athletes. We recognize the opportunity to compete in an NCAA national championship is an experience of a lifetime for the students and their families. Today, we will move forward and conduct championships consistent with the current information and will continue to monitor and make adjustments as needed.

The news comes just hours after Ohio governor Mike DeWine said he is in the process of issuing an order limiting mass gatherings in the state. That order would impact local sporting events, including the NCAA Tournament's First Four in Dayton and first- and second-round games in Cleveland, and would limit the number of spectators to parents and essential staff.

Asked earlier in the day about the possibility of playing an NCAA Tournament game in an empty arena, Ohio State point guard C.J. Walker said the Buckeyes are only focused on what they can control.

“We practice in front of zero people every day,” Walker said. “We grind and work every day with nobody there and nobody watching.”

The NCAA Tournament, commonly referred to as March Madness, is one of the premier events in college sports, generating millions of dollars in revenue for the NCAA and its programs each March. The event will now be played in empty areas and stadiums in 14 cities throughout the country, including Madison Square Garden in New York City, Staples Center in Los Angeles, Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis and Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta — the site of the 2020 Final Four.