

Ohio State Athletic Director Gene Smith Details Safety Protocols



Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith, OSU Deputy Chief of Police, Tracy Hahn; Assistant AD, Event Management, Ericka Hoon and Assistant AD, Ticketing, Brett Scarbrough spoke to media on Monday about Ohio State's safety protocols for football games this fall.

Notes and bullets from the session follow:

- Smith gave a brief opening statement, and encouraged Buckeye fans to be safe this fall. "We need to encourage our Buckeye fans to make sure that they protect themselves and protect those around them."
- Hahn echoed those sentiments, and mentioned that Ohio State will have a law enforcement presence on campus to make sure that no one is tailgating in parking lots or partying on campus. She also mentioned that mask wearing is required for the few that are allowed on campus.
- Scarbrough gave some brief explanation of the ticketing process. He estimated that there will be roughly 650 tickets for home players and coach families and roughly 400 for road teams. All families will be in pod seating spanning seven sections, all at least six feet apart.
- Scarbrough said that installation for the fan cutout program opened today and has been "going well." He said that OSU is over 4,300 sold and it will take at least "45-50 man hours" to get every one installed for Saturday.
- Smith said that getting Ohio State the chance to compete for a title was crucial. "I think everyone knows how I feel about our coaches and our players. The whole battle was to try to give them a chance to play the game they love, coach the game they love, and they've worked so hard to have a chance to play... There's no question that we have talent, we have that capacity, and I was fighting hard. It's such a relief to be here, to know that we'll have a chance to play."
- Hahn said that Ohio State will start with a warning and escort anyone out that is attempting to tailgate or enter the stadium.
- Smith said that coaches and schools will not be fined if coaches are not following mask rules, and said that the Big Ten is trusting schools to follow those guidelines. He said that Ohio State will be sure to have a sort of "get back coach" to make sure that coaches are wearing their masks.
- Smith said that Ohio State will be "following our same policy" regarding the announcement of any cases, and that players unable to play will be announced in the Friday morning injury report as usual.
- Smith was asked about his nerves, and said that he feels "real comfortable" with the protocols

that Ohio State has in place, and that his trepidation right now is “more about the game” and that he’s “moved into football mode.”

- Smith said that the Big Ten will “continue to evaluate what’s happening in other states” when looking at rules regarding fans in the stands, but with stringent rules in states like Wisconsin and New Jersey, they wanted consistency across the board.
- Smith said that penalties will be enforced if teams exceed decibel level rules, and that he may have to be “marching down the hall” to speak with the marketing team if Ohio State takes such a penalty.
- Smith explained that “parents, players and the coaching staff” are the highest priority, and that getting marching bands into the stands just wasn’t realistic with capacity limits across the conference.
- Smith said that Ohio State thought it could get 20,000 people into the stands comfortably but wanted to stay in line with the rest of the Big Ten.
- Ohio State will not be doing “day of game” travel and has set up hotel accommodations with the hotels “all to themselves” to keep players in a bubble.
- When asked about the biggest challenge, Smith said that getting the presidents to allow them to play was the biggest obstacle. He did mention that getting the schedule done was tricky too.
- Ohio State will do prep at the WHAC and then bus to the stadium on gameday.
- Smith said that Ohio State is considering a move to that set up full-time, even when things are back to normal, accommodating traditions, of course.
- Ohio State will stay at a team hotel the night before games, just not the Blackwell, because it has been turned into dorms.
- Smith said that without state regulations, Ohio State would be comfortable with about 21,000 fans in the stadium.
- Ohio State will be flying to every game, “with a middle seat open” and larger planes than usual, though he did say that Michigan State is “still up in the air” though Ohio State will likely at least fly back from East Lansing.