

Ohio State Athletic Director Gene Smith Discusses Beginning Of Fall Camp, Uncertainty Of 2020 Season



In an interview with 97.1 The Fan's Bishop and Laurinaitis on Wednesday morning, Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith said the Buckeyes will begin walk-through practices this Friday and then open fall camp on Aug. 7.

Gene Smith - @OSU_AD - (Ohio State Athletic Director) 7-22-20 <https://t.co/jimgoKZBBD>

— Bishop and Laurinaitis (@971BLS) July 22, 2020

The walk-through practices begin a little more than a week after Ohio State resumed voluntary workouts following a brief hiatus due to an unspecified number of positive COVID-19 cases in the athletic department. Players can soon participate in up to 20 countable hours of athletically related activities, including eight hours of weight training and conditioning, six hours of walk-throughs and six hours of meetings.

Nevertheless, Smith said there's still plenty of uncertainty surrounding the 2020 season as the Big Ten works to finalize its conference-only schedule.

"I think everyone that works in the industry and everyone who's paying attention understands that there are a lot of moving parts," Smith said. "We just need to be patient and allow our experts around this virus to continue to do their work and give us guidance, so that we can make some leadership decisions."

Asked if the Big Ten has considered moving games to the spring, Smith said the conference's athletic directors have not yet discussed such a scenario. And while he acknowledged it's something they may have to consider as things unfold, he's hopeful the added flexibility that comes with a conference-only schedule will allow for the season to be played this fall.

"The flexibility that having September to schedule games or not provides us unbelievable opportunity," Smith said. "The beauty of what we did - we felt - is that it gave us the ability to slide the schedule. If

for some reason we can't start on Sept. 5, we can slide it because we control the schedule. We're still in the process of defining what the schedule will be, but it would give us the flexibility to slide. Hopefully, if we can't play 'x' number of games, we can play 'y' number of games.

"We have young people whose futures are aligned with their opportunities to play this fall. We've got to make sure we don't overreact and we give them a chance. I also think athletics can help galvanize our country and our communities in a storm or a crisis. I think if we're fortunate enough to have sports, it will help us as we try and transition back to the new next."

Before games can be played, though, the Buckeyes must get through fall camp. Smith added he's not completely comfortable with the idea of full-fledged practices beginning in a little over two weeks, but he's getting there based on how they've handled things inside their facilities thus far.

"I don't have a comfort level there yet, but I do relative to what we've done in the voluntary workout space, what we're gonna start doing July 24th when we start walkthroughs, I feel really, really good."

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