

Ohio State Athletic Director Gene Smith Discusses The Latest On The 2020 Season, Planned Reduced Capacity At Ohio Stadium



Although Ohio State's Sept. 5 season opener against Bowling Green in just 60 days, plenty of questions about the season remain. Most notably, will it begin on time and will it be played in its entirety?

As part of Buckeye Sports Bulletin's annual interview issue, we posed those questions - and more - to Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith on Monday morning.

"I just don't know yet," Smith said. "As a conference, we're continuing to have discussions. You just have to wait and see how the virus continues to be managed. We'll hopefully have more clarity as we get through July."

Over the last few months, numerous hypothetical models have been discussed for the upcoming season, including an all-conference slate, regional matchups and even moving the season to next spring. According to Smith, the continued spread of the coronavirus means that every scenario is on the table at this point in time.

"There's no model lined up, so everything is under consideration," Smith said. "Hopefully, we'll have an answer soon."

Smith previously mentioned the possibility of a reduced capacity at Ohio Stadium in order to adhere to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's guidelines on social distancing. That remains the plan, though it'll most likely be on the short end of the spectrum.

"If we have an opportunity to have people (and) if we have an opportunity to play, we're going to have to provide six feet of social distancing, so we're probably in that 20,000-people range," Smith said. "The virus has gotten worse in a lot of parts of our country, as you well know, and we have spikes right now in Ohio, so I don't think it's going to get better to the point where the CDC could loosen the guidelines."

Ohio State announced last month that more than 44,000 season ticket holders renewed their packages for the upcoming season, but the majority would be refunded if the 105,000-seat Ohio Stadium is at one-fifth capacity. Not to mention, the Buckeyes have not yet decided who would get first dibs on the seats, whether it would be students, season ticket holders or individual game buyers.

"We're just not there yet," Smith said.

To read our interview with Smith in its entirety, sign up for four free print editions of Buckeye Sports Bulletin at the link below. No credit card required: <http://www.buckeyesports.com/subscribe-4issue-trial/>