



## **Ohio State Incoming President Kristina Johnson, Athletic Director Gene Smith Aligned To Delay, Not Postpone Football Season**

Following the news that the Big Ten will be postponing the fall sports season until the end of 2020, Ohio State released a statement that included quotes from incoming president Kristina M. Johnson and athletic director Gene Smith.

The statement starts off by explaining how the decision to postpone fall sports came to be, which is that it “was based upon the recommendation of medical experts within the Big Ten Task Force for Emerging Infectious Diseases in collaboration with the Big Ten Sports Medicine Committee.”

Smith mentioned his sadness for the Ohio State players who have currently lost their seasons, pending the potential to play in the spring, and that he and Johnson were on the same page in wanting to find a way to delay instead of already going to the spring.

“This is an incredibly sad day for our student-athletes, who have worked so hard and been so vigilant fighting against this pandemic to get this close to their season,” Smith said in the statement. “My heart aches for them and their families.

“President-elect Johnson and I were totally aligned in our efforts to delay the start of the season rather than postpone. I am so grateful to her for all her efforts in support of our student-athletes and a traditional fall season.

“As an institution and as an athletic department, we have a responsibility first and foremost to care for the health, safety and wellness of our students and staff, and I believe we have done that successfully.”

But Smith also said in an interview with the Big Ten Network following the release of the statement that Ohio State still was with what the Big Ten ended up deciding.

“We stand with the league, we understand that the medical advice that we received, we understand that. We were getting ready to put on pads and that was a point, that was a moment where the science began to become real,” Smith said. “We would have preferred to play, like everyone else with the

passion that our student-athletes have, but at the end of the day, the medical advice and science overruled where we were today.”

Johnson also said in the statement that this was a tough decision to be a part of overall because of her athletic background as a member of the field hockey team and founder of the varsity lacrosse team at Stanford.

“As a former collegiate athlete whose career in sports was cut short by circumstances beyond my control, I deeply feel the pain, frustration and disappointment that all our players, coaches and staff – and all Buckeye fans – are feeling today,” Johnson said in the statement. “I will continue to work closely with Athletics Director Gene Smith, Coach Ryan Day and all coaches and other leaders, to return our student-athletes to competition as soon as possible, while staying safe and healthy.

“We are focused on supporting our student-athletes in every way, ensuring their scholarships are still in place, and looking out for their health and safety and the health and safety of all our students as they continue to pursue their studies in these challenging times.”

Read the full statement by Ohio State on the postponement of fall sports [here](#).

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