

Ohio State Required Football Players, Parents To Sign Coronavirus Risk Waiver Upon Return To Campus



As first reported by Joey Kaufman of The Columbus Dispatch, Ohio State football players were required to sign an acknowledgement of risk waiver upon their return to campus last week.

Referred to as the Buckeye Pledge," the two-page document outlines the various health risks involved with workouts and commits players to coronavirus testing and potential self-quarantining to "help stop the spread of COVID-19." It also asks them to report possible exposure to the virus in a timely manner and to practice the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's guidelines, which includes wearing a mask and practicing social distancing.

Every football player signed the waiver, though Ohio State does not plan to share the results of the initial round of testing due to privacy concerns. Incoming freshman under the age of 18 needed to have a parent or legal guardian sign the waiver, as well.

Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith told ESPN's Heather Dinich the waiver is intended more for educational purposes than liability.

"We don't look at that as a legal document," Smith said. "It allows us to help you so that if we face a situation, our trainers, our strength coaches, our coaches or any athletic administrator sees a student-athlete not wearing a mask or not social distancing, we can say, 'Hey, you made a commitment. You signed a pledge. Your parents signed a pledge. Your parents are a part of this.'"

The waiver states that any players who does not adhere to the pledge may be prohibited from participating in athletic activities or using the program's facilities, such as the Woody Hayes Athletic Center. It would not impact their scholarship status, however.

"You've got to make a commitment," Smith said. "If you're going back to your apartment, with your roommates or by yourself or whatever, or if you choose to go out and have dinner somewhere now that places are reopening, you need to wear a mask. You need to social distance. We're hammering our kids

on that concept. Social distancing is the biggest challenge we've been having. They're kids. They want to be close to one another."

Ohio State began testing players upon their arrival on campus last Monday, and any player who tested positive immediately began a 14-day isolation period. There's only so much the university can control once the players leave the facility, though, which is why the pledge asks them to participate fully and honestly.

"They all want to play," Smith said. "They all want an opportunity to have a season. Look, you're the ones at the end of the day that if you don't follow these protocols, you're going to make it very difficult for us to help you have that season."

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