Ohio State Will Not Sell Tickets For Spring Game, Optimistic For Fall Attendance

Although Ohio Governor Mike DeWine announced earlier this week that sports teams that play in outdoor venues could have up to 30 percent capacity beginning in April, Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith said the Buckeyes will not be selling tickets for the annual spring game.

“As of right now, we’re just on hold for the spring game,” Smith said during a conference call on Wednesday afternoon. “If we’re allowed to have fans, we will not have a ticketed event. It will not be one where we’ll charge. My hope is that we’ll have an opportunity to develop a strategy to recognize our front line people, (like) our nurses, our doctors, our custodians, our bus drivers and all those people who have made so many sacrifices for us for a long time now.

“That would be my hope, that we could come up with a strategy to recognize them and invite them to the spring game and, of course, the parents of our student-athletes. That’s kind of my thinking right now, but we’ve got a ways to go before we get to that point.”

Ohio State has not officially announced a date for the spring game, but head coach Ryan Day said earlier this month the plan is to play it on April 17 at Ohio Stadium. The Buckeyes did not have a spring game last year due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Ohio State has also not determined how many fans could be allowed to attend games in the fall, as attendance last season was limited to just socially distanced family of student-athletes and staff members, as well as media. All will depend on the current vaccine rollout, if the virus positivity rates continue to decrease and if variants become more prevalent in the state.

“I’m like everybody else, I’m curious.” Smith said. “I’m hopeful that what we’re experiencing now from a low positivity rate and number of people in the hospitals and the vaccine and herd immunity and all those things continue, and that we have some new normal, whatever that will be, in the fall.

“My assumption is we’ll still have to do a number of different things around certain protocols, like wear masks and things of that nature, but I can’t begin to share what I think capacity allowance will be. I was really pleased to hear our governor say that his goal is to hopefully provide 30 percent capacity after April 1 for arenas and things of that nature, so I’m optimistic, but I was optimistic early last year.”

Additionally, Smith said there will be no changes to the Big Ten’s current policy regarding attendance

at basketball games. He did express disappointment that fans couldn’t be in attendance for the thrilling game against Michigan last Sunday, though.

“Can you imagine what Sunday would have been like?” Smith said. “That would have been off the chain. So would the Iowa game and, of course, the Illinois game. But unfortunately, no.”

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