

SPORTS

NBA and NHL Mull Plans for Finishing Seasons

BY BEN DIERS

Since the announcement that the NBA would be suspending its season indefinitely due to the Coronavirus outbreak on March 11th, the world of professional sports has been left in a state of uncertainty. Soon after the NBA's announcement, the NHL announced a similar suspension on March 12th. Initially, there was hope that these suspensions would last only a few weeks with hopes of resuming play as soon as possible. However, as the weeks go by and the virus continues to spread, both the NBA and NHL have been forced to make difficult decisions regarding the rest of their respective seasons.

On the NBA side of things, the regular season was originally scheduled to wrap up on April 16th with the playoffs scheduled to follow soon after. However, with the ongoing suspension of the season, the NBA is being forced to consider how the rest of the season will play out. Some have suggested simply starting from where the schedule left off once it is deemed safe to do so, even if it means there are no fans in attendance. However, others have favored more creative approaches that would either see a shortened version of the final month of regular-season games or just starting the playoffs based on the standings when the schedule was suspended. Some have even suggested that the rest of the season should just be canceled.

In an interview with ESPN, Houston Rockets Owner Tilman Fertitta expressed his belief that the rest of the season should continue at some point. Fertitta said, "when we come back, we want to play in front of the fans, but I don't think we're going to be able to play in front of the fans because it's not going to be the right thing to do. ... I think it would be great to start playing basketball whenever the doctors and the NBA tell us it's alright. You know, it would be a shame not to play basketball and finish this year." According to Sports Illustrated, NBA Commissioner Adam Silver has stated that the league will not attempt to make any decisions regarding the rest of the season until at least May 1st.

Though there is much uncertainty surrounding the NBA schedule, there seems to be even more doubt about the fate of the NHL season. The NHL regular season was originally scheduled to conclude on April 4th with the Stanley Cup Playoffs to follow soon after. Fans and media members alike have proposed similar ideas to those suggested for the NBA about how the league should handle the rest of the season. The NHL has even announced a hypothetical plan to play an abbreviated form of the Stanley Cup Playoffs, with all games to take place in states and cities with lower population densities like North Dakota. In an interview with ESPN, Los Angeles Kings defenseman Drew Doughty expressed doubt that the season will ever resume, saying, "I don't see how this season is going to return. I really don't ... I think the NHL would have to make some kind of decision on that soon, and it seems like it's pretty tough to resume the season or the playoffs." NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman has also publicly acknowledged that canceling the rest of the NHL season is a realistic possibility.

Whether or not the NBA and NHL decide to continue with their seasons at some point, it is likely that final decisions on either will not come until May at the earliest. Even if the seasons were resumed, players would need some amount of time to get back into shape before real competition could begin.

The NCAA and COVID-19

BY TYLER HUDSON

The spring semester began just the same as any other across the nation. Schools, programs, and sports were in full swing through most of the winter season with little thought of what would come to be. It was just before NCAA Championships began to take place across the nation that the threat of COVID-19 started to loom over the United States.

The realization that collegiate athletics would suffer first occurred following the decision of numerous schools and conferences to retract athletes from championship events, many of which were already on-site for these events. Student-athletes were having their dreams ripped away from them across the country. Just a few days after school withdrawals from athletic competition began to accumulate, it was decided that the NCAA as a whole would cancel all national championship events for the winter season. This was followed by the news of a spring season suspension across the nation: no sports for the remainder of the academic year.

The news of the cancellation brought heartache and frustration to all who were affected by the catastrophe. Among the struggles the entire nation has been facing, those involved in the NCAA - coaches, students, fans, and families - have been struggling to cope with the harsh and sudden end to sports. Student-athletes had to face the reality that they would not be able to finish out their seasons; for many, this meant the end of their NCAA career.

The NCAA decided to grant student-athletes an additional season of eligibility for the spring of 2021, even those who were in their final year of eligibility. All three divisions of the NCAA made the decision to provide Student-Athletes with the extra season of eligibility. However, no one would have the chance to redeem their unfinished winter seasons that were cut short. The NCAA stated that the winter season had progressed long enough that all conference championships were completed, which classified the season as "completed," even though national championship events had not taken place.

While the NCAA has granted an additional season of eligibility for spring-sport athletes, many schools have elected to forfeit this right. The decision of these schools did not immediately follow the ruling of the NCAA, but just began to surface over the first couple weeks of April. Wisconsin was the first state to issue a state-wide ban over the NCAA ruling, granting no additional eligibility for student-athletes at any college or university. In addition to the state of Wisconsin, the Ivy League has also announced that they will not grant a fifth year of eligibility for their student-athletes.

These decisions have left many wondering where the eligibility bans will end. It's hard to say how many additional schools, conferences, or states will follow suit in the decision to prevent fifth-year student-athletes from returning. Not only has this stirred up controversy over the value colleges and universities place on their student-athletes, but it has led to numerous transfers within the NCAA among individuals who wish to complete their collegiate careers, even if it means doing so at a different institution.