



Missouri State High School Activities Association

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Loss is Gain for Missouri's High School Seniors

By Karissa Niehoff, Executive Director of the National Federation of State High School Associations and Dr. Kerwin Urhahn, Executive Director of the Missouri State High School Activities Association.

Have you ever wondered what life would be like without sports and activities?

Now we know. And it isn't fun. No NCAA events. No concerts to attend. No professional sporting events. And the list of community cancellations and postponements is nearly endless.

If you're a high school sports and activities fan, the disappointment runs even deeper, and it strikes much closer to home. The interruption of school has played havoc with the spring school events here in Missouri. Months of expectation and intense preparation appear to have been wasted for hundreds of high school sports teams, school musicians, speech, debate, theatre and scholar bowl students. And depending where you live, the dream of scoring a decisive victory over an archrival or competing for a state championship or festival has either been put on hold or permanently surrendered.

It's "wait 'til next year" for freshmen, sophomores and juniors. But for most of the high school seniors who participate in a spring sports and activities, this is more than a lost season. It's the end of an active high school career.

The senior musician will never have the opportunity to perform one last time with their school choir, band or orchestra. The four-year actress will not have an opportunity to act in a last school production. The senior first baseman who picked up his first bat when he was five years old will never have the opportunity to swing at an 82 mile an hour fastball again. The champion runner who has diligently trained to shatter the high school state record may never compete in the 800 again. The young woman who was elected captain of her tennis team will never know how deep into the tournament her squad could have gone.

But here's what *will* happen, and it's significant. These same students have learned that sports and activities is about far more than trying to hit a ball, with a stick, play an instrument or debate a topic; it's about a group of young people from vastly different backgrounds coming together as a team. The senior has discovered that if a person has enough determination, barriers once thought impossible can be broken. And the individual will take the leadership skills learned as a student participant and apply them to everything he or she will do for the rest of their life.

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Their seasons—indeed, their high school careers—may be over, but the character those seniors have developed because they participated in education-based high school sports and activities lives on. It will encourage, guide and positively influence communities here in Missouri for the next generation and beyond.

High school seniors, thank you for the contribution you have made to your team, your ensembles, your school and your community. And thank you for the shared sacrifice you are making right now.

As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, “Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education.” To those MSHSAA student-athletes, musicians, actors, debaters and scholar bowl students who graduate this spring, you may have lost your senior season, but you have gained both intelligence and character because you participated in high school sports and activities. Best wishes for continued growth and success.

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