

Report of the Atlantic Coast Conference COVID-19 Medical Advisory Group  
July 29, 2020

INTRODUCTION

Since May 14<sup>th</sup>, the Atlantic Coast Conference COVID-19 Medical Advisory Group (MAG) has met weekly to share information related to the impact of COVID-19 on college campuses and the return of college sports. As a result of the discussions, the MAG has determined it is prudent to recommend minimum standards be established as campus and college sports leaders evaluate the return of college sports for the 2020-21 academic year. Given the nature of the virus, minimum standards will provide guidance on appropriate risk mitigation strategies and engender a level of trust and confidence among members that conference colleagues have taken on the same, if not additional, strategies. The MAG is comprised of each member institution and includes a cross-section of infectious disease experts, public health experts, campus student health experts, team physicians, athletic health care administrators and a mental health expert.

The members of the MAG are:

Dr. Robert Nascimento, Medical Director & Team Physician, Boston College  
Dr. Bailey Nevels, Coordinator of Psychological Health Services for Student-Athletes, Clemson University  
Dr. Cameron Wolfe, chair, Associate Professor of Medicine – Infectious Diseases, Duke University  
Dr. Leslie Beitsch, Chair of Behavioral Sciences & Social Medicine, Florida State University  
Dr. Angelo Galante, Chief Medical Officer, Georgia Tech  
Dr. Kevin Gardner, EVP of Research & Innovation, University of Louisville  
Dr. Alberto Caban-Martinez, Professor – Division of Environment & Public Health, University of Miami  
Dr. Mario Ciocca, Director of Sports Medicine, University of North Carolina  
Dr. Julie Casani, Director & Medical Director of Student Health Services, NC State University  
Dr. Matt Leiszler, Team Physician, University of Notre Dame  
Dr. Aaron Mares, Team Physician, University of Pittsburgh  
Brad Pike, Associate AD for Sports Medicine, Syracuse University  
Dr. John MacKnight, Medical Director for Sports Medicine, University of Virginia  
Dr. Mark Rogers, Chief Medical Officer, Team Physician, Virginia Tech  
Murphy Grant, Sr Associate AD, Athletics Health Care Administrator, Wake Forest University

The group has extensively discussed timely updates on campus protocols and the requirements of local and state health officials so that appropriate context could be provided to any discussion on the establishment of the minimum standards across the ACC. Additionally, two members of the MAG have participated in videoconferences that include medical group leadership from each Autonomy Conference to continually share information and attempt to develop protocols that can be used for non-conference competition as well. Throughout, the MAG focused its discussions on protecting the health and safety of student-athletes and staff members, recognizing that any return to close contact sports, and to campus more broadly, brings an inherent risk given the

contagious nature of this virus. Further, the MAG recognizes that local and state requirements, which must be followed, may be stricter than the recommended minimum standards set forth in this document. Finally, as information regarding the virus, testing and public health mitigation strategies evolve, the recommended minimum standards set forth herein are subject to adjustment.

## MINIMUM STANDARDS

Effective for competition against another institution as of August 1, 2020, the following minimum standards are required for ACC institutions to compete in athletics. Non-conference opponents shall meet these standards for the two weeks prior to competition against an ACC team.

The standards below are defined with the understanding that each institution will prioritize the health and safety of its student-athletes and athletics staff by limiting their interaction with individuals who are not part of the team Minimum Testing Standards. Each institution is charged with creating two groups of individuals associated with each team: (i) those that are part of the Minimum Testing Standards; and (ii) those that are not. The MAG recommends that testing be required for all symptomatic individuals based on public health requirements at this time, even those with minimal symptoms consistent with COVID-19. Further, even with its limitations, testing is a strong way to protect student-athletes and adds a level of certainty for both the health care practitioners and the student-athletes. Testing, however, should always augment screening surveillance methods which should, at a minimum, include daily (including game day) temperature and symptom checks for all student-athletes and for all individuals in contact with the team. Nothing contained herein is intended to restrict team medical staff from following any additional practices that they deem appropriate in light of the conditions existing in their respective locales, information received from their local, state and national public health officials, and/or their own medical judgment.

- Minimum Testing Standards
  - In the sport of football, all members of the football team (“Team Members”) and those that are in close contact with Team Members (as explained below) shall be tested each week beginning with the week of the first competition against an opposing team. The test must be administered within three (3) calendar days of the day of competition (e.g., Wednesday test prior to a Saturday game). Additional testing may be done at the institution’s discretion so long as the 3-calendar day requirement is met. At the present time, the medically appropriate weekly test for all sports shall be molecular (PCR) testing with an FDA approval or Emergency Use Authorization. The members of the football team include all student-athletes, countable coaches, and any support staff member that is in regular, in-person close contact with student-athletes, as determined by the institution. These support staff members may include, but are not limited to, medical care providers (e.g., athletic trainers, team physicians, nutritionists,

psychologists), non-countable coaches or administrative support providers (e.g., directors of football operations, player personnel directors, administrative assistants, video directors), academic support providers (e.g., tutors, academic support directors) or other athletic department support providers (e.g., athletic directors, sports information directors, marketing directors, social media directors). Each institution shall attempt to keep support staff members with direct student-athlete contact to a minimum, in accordance with strong social distancing recommendations. Each institution shall also use the contact tracing guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to determine whether additional staff members should be tested, or student-athletes and support staff should be quarantined.

- ACC sport risk assessment:

High	Medium	Low
Football	Baseball	Golf
Volleyball	Softball	Tennis
Field Hockey	Cross Country	Fencing
M/W Soccer		I/O Track & Field
M/W Lacrosse		Swimming & Diving
M/W Basketball		
Wrestling		
Rowing		

- In the sports of volleyball, field hockey, men’s and women’s soccer, and men’s and women’s lacrosse, men’s and women’s basketball, rowing and wrestling, all members of the respective team and those that are in close contact with the team shall be tested every week beginning with the week of the first competition against an opposing team. In the sports of baseball, softball and cross country, all members of the respective team and those that are in close contact with the team shall be tested every other week beginning with the week of the first competition against an opposing team. The test must be administered within three (3) calendar days of the first competition of the week (e.g., Wednesday test prior to a Saturday game). Additional testing may be done at the institution’s discretion so long as the 3-calendar day requirement is met. In the sports of golf, tennis, fencing, indoor and outdoor track and field, and swimming and diving, regular testing would not be required; however, pursuant to local, state and national health guidance, testing of symptomatic members of the respective team would be required. Testing of asymptomatic close contacts should be at the discretion of the institution in consultation with contact tracing teams. The definitions for teams and close contacts for football should apply to these sports as well.
- Institutions must follow contact tracing protocols as dictated by their local and state health departments. Pursuant to current CDC guidance, prolonged close contact is defined as contact within six (6) feet for at least 15 minutes. The group

acknowledges the difficulty in applying this CDC definition to sport; however, local contact tracing procedures will govern the application of this definition to student-athletes and their interaction in sport. If the CDC provides greater clarity to its guidance for close contact in sport, then the MAG's guidance in this area may also change.

- A student-athlete identified through contact tracing and required to quarantine for 14 days must complete the full quarantine before returning to activity. The MAG will update its guidance in this area if the CDC guidance changes.
  - Pursuant to CDC guidance, a student-athlete who tests positive for COVID-19 shall be isolated for at least 10 days from the onset of symptoms/positive test and at least 1 day (i.e., 24 hours) has passed since recovery defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and improvement of respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath). A student-athlete's medical treatment will be determined by institutional medical staff, and be considered unavailable for training, team/group activities or game play until the student-athlete has both completed necessary isolation and had a medical clearance by team physicians. Consistent with NCAA Constitution 3.2.4.19, the institution's medical staff must have unchallengeable autonomous authority to determine medical management and return-to-play decisions related to student-athletes.
  - A student-athlete who has tested positive is not subject to weekly pre-competition testing for a period of 90 days from the date of the positive test unless the student-athlete exhibits symptoms consistent with COVID-19 (even those with minimal symptoms). At such time, the student-athlete will be required to be tested. This standard is subject to change as research evolves in this area.
- Standard for reporting of positive test results of Team Members to opponents and/or Conference
    - In all sports, positive test results of any Team Member who came into close contact (within six (6) feet for at least 15 minutes) with any member(s) of any opposing team(s) played during the preceding 48 hours shall be shared as quickly as possible and no later than 24 hours following receipt of the test result, to any such opponent(s). The infected individual's role as a Team Member (e.g., setter, offensive lineman, quarterback, assistant coach, athletic trainer) and a summary of their interactions with the opposing team (e.g., played in the second half) shall be included in the information sharing. Unless authorized by the individual or otherwise required by law, the individual's name may not be shared with the opposing team(s). The Chief Medical Officer (or his or her medical designee) of the school of the infected individual shall share this information with the prior opponent's Chief Medical Officer (or his or her medical designee).
  - Standards related to the personnel (e.g., coaches, noncoaching staff) and student-athletes in the team bench area (e.g., football team member spaces, dugout).

- In all sports, all individuals (e.g., coaches, athletic trainers, non-coaching personnel) permitted in the team bench area shall wear a face covering.
- In all sports, student-athletes in the team bench area shall wear a face covering while not in the game. With the exception of student-athletes who are wearing their helmet on the sideline (e.g., football, men's lacrosse), student-athletes in all sports that exit the game will be expected to apply a face covering while in the team bench area.
- In football, face shields are being developed to assist in reducing any potential spread of the virus and several institutions are currently testing those shields. At the current time, the group does not recommend mandating face shields due to the relatively short period of time to validate these products. If a face shield is developed that does not create other safety concerns for the student-athlete (e.g., fogging of shield, increased heat in the helmet), and is an effective method to reduce the spread of the virus, these may be used as a face covering.
- Standards for protocols impacting those individuals on the sidelines outside the team bench area (e.g., athletics staff, media)
  - In all sports, institutional staff at each ACC venue shall develop standards and protocols for safe entry based on local, state and national guidelines. At a minimum, there shall be screening procedures to include temperature and symptom checking for all individuals seeking access to the field enclosure (e.g., field of competition, team areas, sidelines, locker rooms). Any individual who does not pass screening procedures shall be denied access to the field enclosure and be isolated according to local, state and national guidelines.
  - To the greatest extent practicable, everyone on the sideline outside of the team bench area shall adhere to social distancing guidelines (at least six (6) feet apart) and wear a face covering after passing the symptom and temperature screening procedures.
- Standards for sanitizing team, coach and official areas (e.g., locker rooms)
  - Institutional staff are responsible for ensuring that each ACC venue shall be sanitized in the same manner, including all spaces which the home team, visiting team, and game officials will occupy. Institutional staff at each ACC venue shall develop a sanitization plan and include such plan in its Visiting Team Guide. Visiting teams and game officials must comply with each host institution's COVID-19 venue guidelines.
  - Access to sanitized team areas by any person not subject to the Minimum Testing Standards shall be restricted to only those that must enter a sanitized area in order for the contest to be held. In each instance, to the greatest extent practicable, each individual shall adhere to social distancing guidelines (at least six (6) feet apart) and wear a face covering after passing the symptom and temperature screening procedures.

- ACC venues may continue to provide visiting teams with standard equipment so long as the ACC venue manages such equipment in the same manner as it manages the same equipment of the host institution.
- Visiting teams shall be afforded additional time to access their sanitized spaces to conduct additional sanitization at their discretion.
- Procedures for close contacts of Team Members
  - In all sports, postgame interaction between the competing Team Members shall be limited to a brief greeting at midfield, following which Team Members should clear the field.
  - In football, game officials on the field enclosure shall be subject to the Minimum Testing Standards but may be tested on a different day than the teams. The protocols for testing football game officials will be the responsibility of the Conference Office. Further, game officials will undergo symptom and temperature checks upon arrival at the venue.
  - [NOTE: game officials in sports other than football TBD]
  - Other than the game officials, any individuals that will or may touch the game balls (e.g., footballs, soccer balls, field balls, volleyballs) shall wear protective gloves and mask. These individuals shall be symptom and temperature screened but do not require testing.
  - ACC institutions shall review and consider amending the daily interactions by and between student-athletes and other Team Members to mitigate the risk of spread. Institutions must identify any other individuals who are in close contact with Team Members on a regular basis and are therefore subject to the Minimum Testing Standards.
- Game Discontinuation Considerations
  - Inability to isolate new positive cases, or to quarantine high contact risk cases of the traveling and home team University students.
  - Unavailability or inability to perform symptomatic, surveillance or pre-competition testing as required.
  - Campus-wide or local community transmission rates that are considered unsafe by local public health officials.
  - Inability to perform adequate contact tracing consistent with governmental requirements or recommendations.
  - Local public health officials of the home team state that there is an inability for the hospital infrastructure to accommodate a surge in COVID-related hospitalizations.

### Areas of Consideration

- Protection of teams
  - It is the expectation of the Medical Advisory Group that institutional staff at each ACC venue will consider taking all necessary action to eliminate close contact

between an individual subject to the Minimum Testing Standards and an individual not subject to the Minimum Testing Standards, including specifically but without limitation:

- Pregame “festivities” that bring any Team Member within six feet of a non-team individual;
  - Postgame “gatherings” that bring any Team Member within six feet of a non-team individual; and
  - Spacing between fan areas and the field enclosure.
- To the greatest extent practicable, any close contact deemed necessary between or among individuals from these two groups should adhere to social distancing guidelines (at least six (6) feet apart) and the wearing of face coverings after passing the symptom and temperature screening procedures. Institutional staff at each ACC venue should strongly consider limiting field enclosure/sideline access to only essential game personnel (e.g. team bench members, game management personnel, security, medical personnel, and television personnel).
  - To mitigate the risk of virus exposure during travel, institutional staff should evaluate travel policies, including modes of travel, accommodations, travel party size and who is included in the travel party, and team meals.
- Mental Health of Student-Athletes
    - The constant changes associated with competition while mitigating risks associated with COVID-19 can have a significant impact on student-athlete mental health. The Medical Advisory Group recommends all institutions be aware of and attend to the mental health needs of student-athletes as they adapt to these changes.

#### Other Areas

The Medical Advisory Group received a number of other potential considerations from various ACC stakeholders. Upon discussion, the Medical Advisory Group has determined there is not sufficient medical data to justify their inclusion in the recommended minimum standards at this time. The ACC and/or any member institution may take additional action above these recommended minimum standards.