

Big Ten Evaluating Forfeiture Policy For 2021-22 Season



The new and fast-spreading coronavirus variant, Omicron, accounts for nearly three-fourths of new coronavirus cases in the United States, and sports have been impacted in recent weeks with cancellations ripping through the professional and collegiate levels.

In just this past week, dozens of college basketball games have been cancelled, including for the Ohio State men's and women's basketball teams.

The men were set to face Kentucky this past Saturday in the CBS Sports Classic, but it was cancelled following positive tests in the Ohio State program, and it was later announced that the Buckeyes' matchup with UT Martin, scheduled for the past Tuesday, was off as well. The status of their next game against New Orleans on Tuesday is still up in the air, though it is expected to be played.

The women's team traveled all the way out west to suffer a cancellation of their Sunday matchup with UCLA, though it was due to issues within the Bruins program, and the women have since played.

As the conference-only portion of the season approaches for college basketball and other winter sports, the Big Ten is taking a step back to reassess what happens if a team is forced to cancel due to issues with the virus.

"The Big Ten Conference is in the process of evaluating its 2021-22 Forfeiture Policy for conference contests, including whether a contest should automatically be considered a forfeit," said Big Ten Conference Chief Medical Officer Dr. James Borchers. "The health, safety, and well-being of our student-athletes and our campus communities is our top priority. We will continue to work diligently and collaboratively with the Big Ten Conference Administrators Council, Chancellors and Presidents, the Task Force for Emerging Infectious Diseases, and the Sports Medicine Committee to determine next steps."

While the policy will likely be updated at some point, the most recent policy as of Aug. 20 states that if a team is unable to participate due to COVID-19, it will be considered a forfeit, giving the opponent the win. If both teams are unable to participate, the contest will be rescheduled, and if that cannot be done, it will be considered no contest.