

Dear members of the USWRA,

The Board of Directors convened and assessed the benefits and risks of resuming game play. At this time, we cannot support sanctioned gameplay starting in January 2021.

The Board struggled with the decision of pressing forward with starting the season in January. During that discussion, we considered a significant amount of information which was collected and debated during the COVID-19 Task Force meetings. The Board worked with referees, classifiers, and members of the league affected by COVID.

Our meeting opened with conversations on the legal ramifications surrounding an athlete, staff member, supporter or family member who contracted the virus and harm or death occurred due to the virus. We believe that the proper use of waivers along with teams following guidelines could insulate the league from liability. If a situation occurs where the league is found liable however, the league has no financial ability to respond and would cease to exist. After this discussion, we moved away from the conversation about potential legal penalties.

Moral and ethical dilemmas concerning starting game play were discussed in regard to participants spreading the virus to family members and/or friends. We discussed the probability of contracting the virus is not restrictive to game play and can happen at any time. As the discussion progressed, we were reminded that our membership (~600) is small and made up of individuals who may be medically more vulnerable to the virus. The virus affecting any part of the membership would represent a larger percentage than that of the country due to our unique demographic. While the numbers may indicate that an infection may not happen in the league, it is hard to find solace in statistics when it is one of your own that becomes ill or passes as the result of a potentially preventable situation.

As you know, 1-2 times a year, a member of our league passes, and all of our membership is notified and mourns the loss. If someone contracts the virus, word would travel throughout the league and discussions would concern how the Association did not adequately protect its membership. This does not begin to discuss any emotional harm the members may experience if the player were to become sick or pass away. With the known risks of harm from this virus, it is unacceptable as a board to risk adding to the number who we lose each year.

Pros and cons of the league supporting the return to play were discussed. We struggled with two items related to this issue: restrict play knowing some will play on their own or, promote play and increase the risk of contracting COVID-19. It is likely that rugby will be played in small bouts in the coming months no matter the decision of the Board. If league tournament play is allowed, the number of rugby events would increase. With returning to tournament play, the Board would be morally responsible for any harm that comes to the members of the league. Our Constitution states that we are “to provide a mechanism for individuals with severe impairments to compete in a sport, vigorously and **safely**, under specific rules.” It is the obligation of the Board to ensure the constitution is upheld and all the members are remaining safe.

The Board looked at all of the known variables, balanced the pros and cons, and the implications of promoting the return to play. Whether or not this is a popular decision, the Board stands by its decision not to support sanctioned gameplay beginning in January 2021. This decision is in the interest of safety and health of each and every individual who supports our sport. There will be league town halls this upcoming weekend and we ask team representatives to consider making time to attend the town hall. Our request is that only team representatives attend in order to have a more reasonable number of people attending the discussion. Thank you for your understanding during these unprecedented times.

Sincerely,

USWRA Board of Directors