

## Hello Indiana High School Tennis Coaches

This message is offered purely as guidance for summer workouts and the upcoming Boys Tennis season. These recommendations are not official rules and regulations but instead are designed to be simply suggestions about how to handle various situations in practices and matches during this pandemic.

These ideas have been compiled with input from some of your Indiana High School Tennis Coaches Association board members.

Of course, you should first follow any specific instructions you have been given by your school corporation. Also attached and posted are two other documents: the IHSAA Phase guidelines and the USTA tennis guidelines.

But here are some things to ponder:

1. To minimize spread of disease, remind your players to avoid touching teammates, coaches and opponents. Handshakes during lineup introductions, handshakes at the end of a match, high-fives with a teammate after a good shot, and similar instances of touching a teammate or an opponent should be eliminated. Instead, come up with a plan for your team ... for example, maybe at the end of a match (win or lose), instruct your players to walk to the net, touch rackets, and simply say "Nice match" to their opponent. Racket touches could also be used during introductions. And doubles teammates could tap rackets instead of a high-five.
2. Come up with a plan for pre-match instructions and introductions. The instructions are important, but maybe streamline your comments so all the athletes and coaches are not standing close to each other for an extended time. Consider introducing only the names of the varsity lineups ... perhaps JV matchups could be handled one at a time in a smaller setting after the varsity players head off to start their warmups. Players do not need to line up for introductions. Instead, they could be spread out more outside the fence and could walk to their court when their name is called.
3. Stress hand cleanliness to your players. Immediately before a practice or match, players should wash hands and/or use hand sanitizer. During practice, if there's a break, wash hands or use hand sanitizer again, especially before eating a granola bar or similar snack. Immediately after a practice or a match, players should wash hands and/or use hand sanitizer. Check to see if your school athletic trainer, athletic department, nurse, or custodial staff can provide adequate amounts of hand sanitizer that can be kept in an easily accessible location at your courts. Also, ask each player to carry a small personal bottle of hand sanitizer in their racket bag. If one larger bottle of sanitizer is available, a manager could handle the bottle and give each player a squirt.

4. All players should have their own labeled water jug. Do not share.
5. Tennis balls are going to get mixed around during a practice. The idea of limiting certain balls to certain players during practice would be very difficult to administer for most teams. Instead, players should be reminded to keep their hands clean before and after practice and to avoid touching their face. Bottom line, if the hands stay clean, then the tennis balls stay as safe as possible. Painstakingly sanitizing hundreds of individual tennis balls on a daily basis seems impractical.
6. During matches, it might be best if only one player per match is assigned to turn the scorecards at the changeovers. One suggestion would be that the home team should be in charge of turning scorecards on all courts. Scorecards then should be sanitized after each match before the next match comes on to the court.
7. When possible, leave gates open so that players can come and go without touching latches and gates. If this is not practical, then sanitize the latches and gates frequently.
8. Since COVID-19 is spread primarily through face-to-face contact of respiratory droplets, be vigilant of proper social distancing during practice breaks, team meetings, and huddles. Teens are not likely to be good at this on their own, so coaches will need to be aware of distancing. For example, huddles may need to be twice as big as usual and shorter in duration.
9. Check to make sure restrooms are clean and properly stocked before hosting matches.
10. Masks could be worn when players are off the court waiting for their match or waiting for the team match to end. Create a culture that values wearing face coverings for everyone's safety. For example, wearing masks on the bus ride is respectful to the bus drivers, many of whom are older. Wearing masks off the court during a match may help a nearby older adult fan feel more comfortable and safer. Fans could be encouraged to wear face coverings. Tape markings could be used on bleachers to indicate proper social distancing of fans.
11. Consider issuing two new balls per JV match so the players are not using balls already used by other players earlier in the evening,
12. Try to use ball hoppers to pick up balls during practice instead of hands.
13. Discuss with your players the importance of not coming to practice or to matches when sick. Typically teens don't want to miss a match so they will hide their sickness and try to play through it. But this could be dangerous to the entire team.

14. Consider sometimes allowing players to leave with their parents after their match instead of staying until the final match ends late in the evening.
15. Check with your AD about whether you will be permitted to make a lengthy trip to an invitational that is on your schedule. Find out whether you will be allowed to play in an overnight tourney if one is on your schedule. The reality is some schools will have to drop out of invites this season. If you need to drop out, be sure the host is notified as soon as possible so they can try to find a replacement. Perhaps the host would agree to seek a one-year replacement so that you could return to the event the next school year. Due to these situations, you might be able to join an invitational in your area as a one-year replacement. And many schools may have an extra match opening or two if some invites get cancelled.
16. Due to transportation rules (social distancing), it is possible that those with larger teams may be restricted to traveling with smaller numbers this season. Perhaps be prepared at the preseason meeting to explain to players and parents that players near the bottom of the ladder may not get as many match opportunities as normal this season. Also, check with your school to see if some players might be able to travel to and from matches with their parents. Some schools will do this as long as waivers are signed in advance.
17. If fans are restricted at any of your home dual matches or tournaments, be sure to communicate that info with the opposing team in advance so they can relay the info to the parents. Perhaps at some sites fans would be asked not to use bleachers but instead to sit in lawn chairs to better isolate. Again, communicate that information in advance.
18. If you have events where you usually have pitch-in food (Senior Day, an invite, etc.), be aware that you may need to have a new plan this season. Standing in line for food, sharing serving utensils, eating food prepared in someone else's home ... these are all things that may not be doable this season. Players could bring their own individualized snacks or food could be packaged in individual baggies.
19. Be sure you have an effective messaging system in place to be able to contact your players/parents promptly. This will be important as there are likely to be situations where plans change rapidly.