

Good evening team,

If you read Fr. Gibbons newsletter on Sunday, then you read the new rules about students having to quarantine while waiting for a COVID test result. I know there are a lot of questions, possibly some frustrations or stresses around it as well. I'll do my best to try to explain the situation so that you fully understand what's happening, as well as what options are in front of you.

This is certainly not an email of me defending the administration's decision nor is it a critique either. This is the situation that we are in and this email is my attempt to simply provide you with as much information as possible.

Please read everything fully and carefully.

First some background to the decision...

Last semester, because we only had half the students on campus at a time, we were able to preserve 6 feet distance in the classrooms and other areas of large gatherings. Because we kept 6 feet, if a student in class tested positive, students sitting around him would not need to quarantine by CDC guidelines.

This semester, with almost everyone going back, students only sit 3 feet apart during class and other times on campus. Therefore, if a student tests positive, everyone who sits around him in class, at Mass, meetings, etc. will have to quarantine.

Here's a hypothetical scenario: an athlete tests with us on Monday and is positive without knowing it. He goes to school the next three days, sits near 3-4 students in each class for 4 classes a day for 3 days. In the worst case scenario, that could be 20-30 students that the school would be forced to quarantine from that one case.

This tricky situation led to a difficult decision...

Because of the situation described above, in an attempt to limit the number of possible quarantines we create, the school has made the decision that anyone who is waiting on a COVID test result will stay off campus until that result is received. This applies to anyone...not just athletes...however, the biggest population that is impacted are the athletes who get tested every 2 weeks.

Therefore, **in the week's that our racquetball team tests, all athletes have to go virtual until that negative test result is received.**

Even more practically, what does this mean for us?

We have three more testing dates left:

- Monday, January 18
- Monday, February 1
- Monday, February 15

Those three weeks, students will come to campus Monday morning to get tested and then immediately go back home, where they will attend classes virtually until the results come back. Those have typically been coming in about Thursday morning.

Do we really have to do this?

Yes. The testing is required by the City of St. Louis. That's non-negotiable. The decision for students to stay virtual has been made by the school administration in order to best keep our community safe and limit the number of quarantines.

The administration did say that they will revisit the decision at the end of January where they will decide to either keep it the same or make changes.

Do I/we have options to reduce the number of days I have to be at home?

Yes....some....although none are perfect.

1. This is not really anything you need to do but I'll mention that the school has claimed they are working with CareSTL in an attempt to try to get the results back sooner. But no guarantees that I'm aware of.
2. You are always welcome to go get your own test if you think you can get quicker results. Some tests out there are much faster...but they might charge and they might not be available for all people....I am certainly not pushing anyone in that direction - that's a decision for families to make - but it is allowed if you decide to pursue it.
3. The school is looking into a possible situation where the students could come to campus in a separate location (that is spaced 6 feet apart) and attend class virtually from there. The benefit to this would be that they might be able to still meet with teachers and work with other students. This has not been officially determined yet though.

What if I can't handle being virtual again?

We understand that for some students, it's *very important* that you are on campus in-person to learn this semester. Some of us might be able to deal with the 3 inconvenient weeks of virtual and get through them until the end of the season. But for others, school takes priority and you might need to be in class.

If that applies to you, please know that we understand and we support you. I *hate* that some students might have to choose between finishing the racquetball season or being in-person fully for class....but unfortunately, that appears to be the situation we're in. Your academics certainly take priority and we support whatever decision families make.

I heard something about 48 hours before a test, what's the deal with that?

A person can be contagious up to 48 hours before he/she ever shows symptoms of COVID-19. So when they conduct contact tracing on those that are positive, they always ask about close contacts 48 hours before they show symptoms or before their test (if they're asymptomatic).

Because of this, the school is asking that if you get your own test, you plan it so that you don't have any close contacts 48 hours before (i.e. you're not at school). This normally doesn't apply to us because we test Monday morning, after the weekend.

If you were to get your own test, we ask that you do it sometime after 3pm on Sunday or on Monday.

You can still come to JV3 matches on Saturday and practices on Sunday.

Is there anything we need to do or work we need to take care of?

If you'll be coming to the SLUH testing, then no! We'll report your "virtual" status to the school that week and then as soon as we get the results, I will let you know so that you can return to campus.

If you decide at any point to get your own test, **I NEED YOU TO BE IN COMMUNICATION WITH ME.** Bottom line: **I need to know.** If I don't hear from you, I am assuming that you'll be attending the SLUH testing.

I hope this email helps. Trust me, I understand that this poses extra obstacles, stresses, and inconveniences on families and students. I'm sorry that we all have to go through this.

While this situation is far beyond my control and outside of my hands, I am happy to listen to any concerns, questions, or comments you might have. And if you would like to have a conversation about your status on the team because of this, I am certainly here to chat with you.

I know this year has been challenging but **please know how grateful I am that we get to play and that I get to be with you this season.** All of us coaches are.

God bless,
Coach Deves
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