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Return to play plan – Nova Scotia Cricket Association

Introduction

In preparing this plan, NSCA consulted with Sport NS, Cricket Newfoundland & Labrador, Cricket New Brunswick, Cricket PEI, Quebec Cricket Federation, medical professionals, and national body Cricket Canada. In addition, it was reviewed by Ingleton Liburd, General Manager of Cricket Canada, with input from various other provinces within Canada. The plan was prepared by a committee of the National Board and approved by the NSCA Board in a meeting on May 31st 2020.

About cricket

While NSCA is a PSO affiliated with Sport NS, Cricket is not well known in the province, it may be useful to outline the main aspects of the sport to assist in evaluating this plan. It is a bat and ball game without physical contact, with typical distances of more than 2m between players. It is closely analogous to softball and baseball. In Nova Scotia the game, as organized by and under the purview of NSCA, is played only on the Halifax Commons which makes enforcing the control mechanisms effective.

Our programmes have two main components when normally carried out:

Practice

Practice takes place with variable numbers of High Performance (HP) athletes. The main practice facility is Spryfield Lions Gym (Indoors) and Ridgecliffe Middle School (Playground) for physical training. There are also "nets" within the batting cages – at the Warehouse (private facility in Lower Sackville), where at a lane each where a single batsman will practice against 3-4 bowlers taking turns to bowl at them. In addition fielding practice will take place at Ridgecliffe Middle School playground where about 20 participants practice fielding, catching and throwing, usually widely spaced. The only physical contact possible is touching the same ball among the players.

Batsmen require protective equipment – gloves, pads for the legs and a helmet. All the HP athletes have their own equipment and do not share any equipment.

There are changing rooms and washrooms available at all facilities mentioned above that are used on a need basis. No individual / collective showers take place in these facilities.

Matches

Our matches take place at the Halifax Commons. There are no changing rooms available- participants arrive dressed to play. During the season players have access to the Halifax Oval for washrooms at the field and we also have access to The Pavilion which is an equipment storage building.

Each match is played between two teams of 12 with two umpires, for a total of 26 participants. At any given time 15 people are on the field (2 umpires, 11 fielders and 2 batsmen), generally widely spaced (the field is an oval roughly 120 m in diameter). The remainder of the batting team usually sits on the bench, grass or in chairs they have brought themselves at the boundary edge. We do have some spectators – usually family members, but depending on the match this ranges from 0 to at most 10 people, located around the perimeter of the boundary, allowing easy social distancing (there are no stands or bleachers at the field that might concentrate spectators but one 1 bench does have 3 row of seating).

During the match a single ball is used, handled frequently by the bowler delivering the ball to the batsman, and occasionally by the rest of the fielding team. Fielders (apart from the wicket keeper-catcher) do not wear gloves. Batsmen require protective equipment – gloves, pads for the legs and a helmet. Some players have their own equipment but there is also shared equipment for those who do not own their own.

Membership

Our membership is made up of males aged between 16 to 50 with efforts ongoing to bring diversity to the sport, as soon NSCA has an additional ground. The majority of players are international students or first-generation New Canadians (Permanent resident and citizens). Many of the students live in shared apartments.

Review of government guidelines

NOTE: No cricket activity- training or match play – shall start until permitted by the province and the local municipality after the review of the plan that is approved by all parties.

Timelines	Restrictions relevant to sports	Possible cricket activity
Provincial State of Emergency till 31 May 2020	Gatherings restricted to 10; outdoor activities restricted to walking/ running. Golf courses open; gatherings up to 10 people; hard surface parks/ playgrounds remain closed	None
June 1-26, 2020	Team field sports can resume; gatherings of up to 10 with Physical distancing and following the guidelines provided by Province of NS	Net practice at Warehouse, Training at Halifax Commons transitioning to full games when permitted.
July 2020	All Activities at outdoor sports facilities begin if restriction limit for gathering increase to 25	Regular season with restrictions in summer; indoor cricket & HP Program in Winter;
September 2020	Province eases all restrictions and schools open	All Programmes proceed as usual

Jurisdictional scan

A number of national sporting organizations are developing return to play guidelines and these have been reviewed in the preparation of this plan. At this point there are no comprehensive guidelines released by Cricket Canada (Cricket Canada started organizing a committee to work on guidelines on May 15, and we are represented on this). The Australian Institute for Sports report “Framework for Rebooting Sport in a COVID-19 Environment” (see reference at end of document) has extensive general guidelines and principles and contains cricket specific guidelines. The report considers recommended activities at three levels, A, B and C.

Level A - most restricted

- running/aerobic training (solo)
- resistance training (solo)
- skills training (solo).

Level B – moderately restricted

- Nets — batters facing bowlers. Limit bowlers per net.
- Fielding sessions — unrestricted.
- No warm up drills involving unnecessary person-person contact.
- No shining cricket ball with sweat/saliva during training

Level C – least restricted

- Full training and competition.
- No ball shining with sweat/saliva.

In developing this plan we considered all Levels to be applicable at different timelines mentioned above.

On May 15 the English Cricket Board released guidance for the use of practice facilities under strict lockdown (considered equivalent to current level). Their recommendations include

- Exercise outdoors with one other person from outside your household while keeping two meters apart at all times.
- Social distancing of at least two meters must be maintained at all times (unless all participants are members of the same household).
- Only one-to-one coaching is permitted per session.
- Nets should be used on an ‘every other’ basis, leaving one net free between nets.
- using your own equipment if possible.
- Wash hands at home before and after using the outdoor facilities. Bring your own hand sanitizer where possible.

On May 22 the International Cricket Council released “Back to Cricket Guidelines”, a comprehensive document including community guidelines. The community cricket guidelines have a phased approach.

A . Back to training

1. Individual training
2. Small group (3 or less) training/ practice
3. Small group (up to 10) practice
4. Squad based cricket- match play

B. Back to match play

C. Back to travel.

Our plan below aligns with the ICC guidelines as far as possible.

We will revise and adapt the plan with further guidance from the international and national governing bodies when available.

Plan

Any activity is dependent on permission to use facilities under the control of the Halifax Regional Municipality, Government of Nova Scotia in consultation with Sport Nova Scotia.

In addition, all clubs and players need to be comfortable with the plans to resume play prior to a formal decision to re-start any league.

The basic principle used here is that the level of infection generally in the population is low, so the probability of any participant in an activity being infectious is low, especially if those exhibiting symptoms or potentially exposed to a carrier of the virus respect medical advice and isolate. The measures are put in place to minimize the chances of transmission of infection in the low probability that an individual is carrying the virus but is asymptomatic, or ignoring advice.

It is recognized that the composition of our membership means that the major area of vulnerability is that of international travel, and it will be particularly important to emphasize the importance of isolation protocols for those returning from international travel, and their household.

Given that for the most part, cricket can be carried out while respecting a 2 m social distance, the most likely means of transmission is thought to be from mouth/ nose to hand, hand to ball, ball to hand and then hand to face. The measures are designed to break this chain in transmission. Traditionally the condition of the ball sometimes is maintained by the bowler by the use of sweat or saliva, which would be a major means of transmission

General

- The chair of the NSCA's Health and Safety Committee will be the COVID-19 lead and will be responsible for plan and protocol compliance, communication with members and review of the plan, in consultation with the Board of Directors.
- All public health measures required by the Government of Nova Scotia will be respected at all times.
- No participant can be symptomatic – fever, cough, or difficulty breathing; or have had contact with any person who has tested positive in the prior 2 weeks.
- Any participant feeling unwell should stay home.
- All current isolation protocols must be respected (quarantine after travel etc.)

- Depending on medical advice, temperature monitoring of participants may be performed prior to taking part in activity
- Activity can only take place if the organization has adequate supplies of hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and if specified, personal protective equipment.
- Those who either live with, or are in a regular contact with COVID patients will not participate in the first wave of games in June-July for the safety and security of those patients and the extended community
- An accurate record of participants (including multiple methods of contact) must be kept at any event (practice or match) in order to enable contact tracing in the event of a positive test from a participant.
- Process to be administered and monitored by the Health and Safety Committee of NSCA, who report directly to the Board.

March-April timelines:

This is based on what the organization has been doing to date

- Maintaining and spreading the message that no cricketing activity can take place in groups.
- Pro-active in identifying any members disregarding social distancing and provincial regulations by engaging in cricket in public places; contacting these individuals and if required starting internal disciplinary procedures (the discipline policy was amended recently to allow suspension of members from future activities in such cases).
- Continuing education and communication with members emphasizing importance of following provincial guidelines

May timelines

- No use of indoor cricket nets, practice facilities or the field.
- Encouraging individual fitness training
- Preparing for when the emergency may be lifted
- Continued communication and monitoring of member activities

June timelines

- allow use of nets by small numbers under conditions outlined below
- allow fielding practice to take place under protocols outlined below
- After 2 weeks at level 3, resume matches under strict protocols

July timelines

- Move to second stage of protocols
- Continue to play matches under protocols established
- Review and revise protocols after 2 weeks of match play

Protocols

Practice

General (remain in place through all timelines)

- Hand sanitizer must be available for all participants; dilute bleach or alcohol and paper towels available for cleaning shared equipment.

- For sessions that require catching or sharing of balls, these activities will be done before fitness and running activities to avoid sweat and saliva spread
- Shared equipment must be cleaned with an appropriate disinfectant between uses. Note that proper cleaning of batting gloves and helmets requires a careful and painstaking cleaning process which is not possible in any environment; therefore participants must provide their own personal gloves and helmets
- Fielding practices need to be planned so as to respect social distancing, and hand sanitizer needs to be used frequently to prevent potential transmission via the ball. It is recommended that fielders use small personal bottles of hand sanitizer carried with them. Participants should self-monitor and monitor other participants to avoid touching their face with hands after touching the ball.
- Bowlers maintain adequate social distance while waiting their turn to bowl.
- Bowlers bowl with one ball only for the entire practice, returned to them by batsmen wearing gloves
- Balls should be rubbed with hand sanitizer, bleach or soap and water before and after a session use
- Umpires shall stay at 2m+ distance from any player around him on the field.

Matches

(Only to begin when restrictions are eased to include 25 participants)

These measures to stay in place when play re-starts, and to be maintained through all levels:

- Sharing of rides to field should be avoided if possible, but otherwise no more than four to a car; if possible, members of same household travel together
- Non batting team needs to be spaced appropriately – 2 m between players
- No handshakes or high fives, huddles, or any form of physical contact among participants
- No sharing of water bottles; players need to have their own individual water supply
- Participants provide their own batting gloves and helmets; sharing of this equipment is not permitted
- Other shared equipment (pads etc.) must be cleaned with an appropriate disinfectant between uses – the respective club / team captains will ensure execution of this protocol
- Fielders are permitted to wear protective gloves and masks if they wish
- Hand sanitizer must be available on the field; each bowler at minimum should have a personal bottle for use, and it is recommended that players use a personal supply as well. Players are encouraged to use it at the end of the over if they have touched the ball. Bowlers should use it at the beginning and end of every over.
- Participants should self-monitor, and monitor other participants to avoid touching face with hands after touching the ball, without the worry or fear of social stigma of any kind
- If any player feels a breach of protocol, they should announce it right away – even if it is while a game is in progress
- Each team is responsible for having an adequate supply of hand sanitizer. If they do not have this available, the game will not proceed.
- Absolutely no use of saliva on the ball permitted; any bowler observed doing this will be removed from the attack immediately and the ball will be cleaned appropriately.
- Fielders should observe a 2 m distance between them. The only exception would be a wicketkeeper standing up to the stumps, where a minimum 1.5 m distance should be maintained.

- If an umpire observes at any point that social distancing is being compromised, they should call dead ball and ask the captain responsible to take appropriate action.
- Umpires should not take possession of the ball at the fall of a wicket or at intervals and avoid handling it unless necessary. Umpires are advised to wear protective gloves when handling the ball.
- Umpires shall wear a face mask at all times
- Currently only 20% of the members have their own equipment and majority being students, find it unaffordable to purchase their own, and the individual clubs do provide equipment that is shared. Due to the prevailing situation, the clubs have been directed not to provide the shared equipment anymore. On this count, the NSCA is providing a subsidy to members who need financial support to purchase the equipment.
- It is strongly recommended that all players purchase or obtain equipment for their own use.
- In the event that personal equipment cannot be obtained, the following guidelines MUST be adhered to:
 - Sharing of the following equipment is discouraged, but will be permitted after proper disinfection protocol:
 - Batting pads
 - Pads must be wiped and sprayed with disinfectant immediately after use
 - Bats
 - Batgrips and all surfaces must be wiped and disinfected after use. Bats used in the field by a player should be sanitized and rested separately for 5-10 mins before being used again
 - Sharing of the following equipment is strictly forbidden:
 - Helmets
 - Groin protection
 - Batting gloves
 - Keeping Gloves
 - Thigh pads
- Umpires should not be asked to hold bowler's clothing or equipment; players are responsible for their individual equipment on the field.
- Umpires and bowler will be briefly close to each other as the bowler runs past the umpire to deliver the ball. Umpires need to adjust their position to stand initially wide of the stumps away from the bowler's run up, and step into line once the bowler has passed. They may need to stand further back than usual in order to do this.
- The non-striker should run wide of the pitch, at least 2 m from umpire/ bowler and striker; popping creases must be marked onto the grass to allow this.
- Spectators are not encouraged but if present must sit separate from the teams, and respect social distancing amongst themselves.
- Appropriate guidelines will be established to discourage passersby to touch the ball if it goes out of the field of play
- There must be a supply of disinfectant wipes or appropriate cleaning supplies to allow portable toilet surfaces to be cleaned after use.

- Fielders should observe a 2 m distance between them. Wicketkeepers will keep a 2m distance from the stumps where the batsman will be.

Kids programme & other cricket community fundraisers & events

These will not resume in 2020.

Communication plan

Communication is going to be critical in ensuring these measures are effective. The following measures are planned: -

- The chair of the NSCA’s Health and Safety Committee, and Halifax Cricket League club Delegates will be the COVID-19 lead, and lead communications.
- Communication of plan and protocols on organization Web page, Facebook page and all four club whatsapp groups
- Appropriate signage at the practice and playing facility reinforcing social distancing and illness prevention measures (the Public Health Agency of Canada has free posters and handouts available on their website.)
- A pre-game checklist will be published that every individual has to review before turning up for a game. If the individual doubts compliance to any of the criteria in the checklist he should not turn up for the same and notify the club in advance
- Weather-proof copies of protocols to be provided in the vicinity during games for reference
- Protocol summary will be announced before the start of each game
- The checklist will be announced before each game and every player needs to verbally acknowledge and confirm they pass each criteria in the checklist
- All participants must make a declaration (on-line) that they are aware of protocols and are fully respecting government protocols on self-isolation and quarantine for travel before they are allowed to take part in any activity. Any player who does not follow the public safety protocol, before and during the games, will be asked to go back and be disallowed to continue.

Review Schedule

The plan will be reviewed weekly as long as the emergency and restrictions are lifted, and as required at all timelines.

Pre-game checklist

Criteria	Compliance (Yes / No)	Remarks
I do not feel I am symptomatic of COVID-19, as per symptoms defined by the Government of Canada		The player should turn up for the game only after they comply to each criteria
I have not been in touch with anyone I know who is either self-quarantined due to COVID-19 or has shown symptoms of COVID-19 in the past 14 days		

I have my own essential playing equipment and I don't need to share any equipment in the NSCA's "no share" list as part of their protocol		
To the best of my knowledge I am not in breach of any NSCA protocol points		

References:

The Australian Institute of Sport Framework for Rebooting Sport in a COVID-19 Environment; released May 1, 2020. Available on-line at <https://ais.gov.au/>

English Cricket Board: "ECB guidelines for the use of outdoor cricket facilities in lockdown"; <https://www.ecb.co.uk/news/1668576/ecb-guidelines-for-the-use-of-outdoor-cricket-facilities-in-lockdown>

<https://www.ecb.co.uk/news/1657168/cricket-and-covid-19-your-questions-answered>

International Cricket Council "Back to Cricket Guidelines". Available on-line at

<https://resources.pulse.icc-cricket.com/ICC/document/2020/05/22/b75e57b7-ed1e-4025-a542-a4059ceb9efb/ICC-Back-to-Cricket-Guidelines-May20-final-.pdf>

Cricket Canada return to Cricket Plan - <https://cricketcanada.org/news-single?nid=115>