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Deskside with David

Livestreams need to stay: Districts livestreaming high school sports with reduced fan limitations

BY DAVID YARGER

As we pass the year anniversary (I guess you can call it that) of COVID-19 shutting the nation down, I have continually looked back and asked myself, "Has anything good come out of this pandemic?"

When the world gets shut down, you're unable to do activities you want; your way of life gets changed dramatically, or you're walking up to a store then have to turn back to your car to get a mask. It's hard to come up with positives from all of that.

I can wholeheartedly admit I want this all to be over as soon as possible and get back to normalcy. But, I'd be remiss if I didn't say this pandemic has also taught me a lot.

You all know me for being the high school sports guy. The pandemic has not done much to positively affect our local sports. I can tell you, the kids know they have to be safe, but they hate wearing masks during practices and, sometimes, while they play, it's just a fact. Coaches want things back to normal ASAP as well. We know we need to take these safety measures to ensure a transition back to normalcy, and we're just fortunate and grateful to be playing.

Because of the pandemic, fans in the stands have been quite limited. Each home team was granted the right to two fans per the home team roster. So, for example, our Niagara Falls High School basketball team has 11 players, so we can have 22 fans (two people chosen by each player).

Many people were concerned they wouldn't be able to see their local squad play any games this season.



DESKSIDE WITH DAVID:

A SPOTLIGHT ON SPORTS BY LOCAL GURU DAVID YARGER



This is where a positive comes in to play – a positive I feel needs to stay even when things hopefully get back to normal.

Local districts have taken the lead in livestreaming their teams' home games. For example, the Niagara Falls City School District has had the OSC student-produced news channel stream games to a live feed on YouTube. They have done an absolutely terrific job getting to events such as basketball, hockey, bowling and more.

Other districts like Lewiston-Porter and Niagara Wheatfield have a camera in their gym that follows the action and is streamed on YouTube, which has given fans unable to attend a chance to see their local youth play.

Now, these streams aren't new by any means, but I believe they have been taken for granted before or even forgotten. We're very fortunate to have these mediums that give us a chance to watch our local high school athletes.

Even when this all gets back to normal, I feel these forms of streams should stick around.

For Niagara Falls' OSC

livestreams, media education director Rich Meranto said he plans to keep the broadcasts going post COVID-19.

"In my case, the streaming has renewed the interest in live sports broadcasting," he said. "Kids don't watch TV, so they didn't have as much interest in helping with a cable broadcast. But seeing 300-400 people watching a basketball game or even 60-100 watching a swim meet is exciting. We plan to stay with streaming even next year."

Some people aren't as fortunate to be able to come to every game, so sometimes a livestream is their only way of witnessing a game being played. And the fact of the matter is, most people just enjoy watching live sports, whether it be on TV, YouTube or Facebook.

The streams are also beneficial to others teams, because they can watch and get an idea what to expect from a future opponent. Additionally, a lot of players are friends with kids on other teams. With the streams, these friends can go back and watch their buddy's game at the conclusion of their contest.

And we all know parents like to showcase their children. The streams can also be shared on social media for others to watch.

All in all, the streams help get our local athletes gain even more exposure.

We live in an area where some of our athletes go unrecognized. With the streams, this opens up new realms for student-athletes where the footage can be seen by coaches at the next level. The athletes can also possibly use this footage to send out to coaches at the collegiate level, which in turn could help them get scholarships.

Not much positive has come out of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially when it comes to high school sports. But the hard work of the people behind the scenes of the livestreams are really something that we should worship, not just during these tough times, but for the future times to come.

Stay tuned to your local athletes. Winter sports playoffs are right around the corner!

A heartfelt 'Thank you'

On behalf of the Nablo family, we would like to say how thankful we are for our family, friends, neighbors and community. As we helplessly watched our Youngstown home and all of our possessions burn up in

front of us, the feeling of despair was overwhelming. It was early March and we were forced outside by the fire without coats and shoes. Then we were immediately taken in by a selfless neighbor who gave us a safe

zone for our family of five. It was then we realized that it might just be OK.

When people started to hear of the fire and the loss that several families endured, the outreach from so many was heartmelting.

This is a reminder of why we live in this community and we can only hope to pay it forward.

A very grateful family,
Kyle and Kristen Nablo

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