

OPINION: Cancellations, possible stoppages due to virus leave heartbreak in its wake



The spread of COVID-19 has turned the country upside-down, and it now it threatens schools and spring sports on the high school level. Will it prevent celebrations like this one from happening in 2020?

It is something we can't see. We can't touch it. We can't smell it. That is what makes this all the more scary.

COVID-19, better known as the Coronavirus, has flipped the country's life upside-down in a matter of days. For many of us, this virus will be nothing more than a cold or flu-like disease if we contract it, which is great news for me and my family.

However, those aren't the people I'm too concerned about. I fear for the elderly, or those with underlying conditions, that have a weakened immune system and that is when this virus becomes deadly.

That is what made all the cancellations this week necessary. It isn't to stop, but slow the spread of this disease, so that

hospitals do not become overrun with patients and to limit casualties.

It is an unprecedented time we are living in and many people are still unaware exactly what this virus is. If you need proof, look at all the empty toilet paper shelves in stores. Still, don't get that one myself.

My heart goes out to all the people who are affected by this disease, but I wanted to talk about something that is more in my wheelhouse and something that is a lot less "important" in the grand scheme of things.

As many of you already know, sporting events and leagues across the country have been cancelled. The NCAA basketball tournament being shutdown has given a different meaning to "March Madness" these days.

You watch as athletes, who have trained for years to reach a certain point, see their seasons cut short and may never get that opportunity back again. I feel for the seniors who had no idea they would never be able to play in their final game.

Then you look at the professional level and so many people are impacted by this. It is the people who work concessions, park cars, janitorial staff and others who depend on those paychecks to make a living and now don't have one. Their lives are basically at the hands of this virus.

At the high school level, it was heartbreaking to read about the state basketball tournaments that were cancelled after the

first round. Those players, who had hopes of a state title and had been working months for that moment, had it suddenly taken away from them. Those seniors won't get another chance at it.

In the context of sports – not life or death – these are all devastating.

As far as Louisburg and the rest of the state is concerned, it is a reasonable assumption to think the spring season – at the very least – could be delayed. Maybe not, and maybe things will calm down as the spring is scheduled to kick off on March 23 when the Wildcat girls soccer team travels to Harmon for their season opener.

The Wildcats are considered one of the state's best teams in Class 4A as they feature a team with 12 seniors that have played multiple years on the varsity level. They are also back-to-back state runners-up.

Senior golfer Calvin Dillon is poised to get his fourth state medal this year and will try to capture the school's first individual state title. The Wildcats also has another great chance to qualify for state as a team.

Louisburg track returns several state medalists from a year ago and has the potential to do even more damage at the state meet again this season. The school is also competing in girls swim for the first time in school history, while the baseball and softball teams are under new head coaches and having promising seasons in front of them.

If this season gets cancelled, I

cannot begin to fathom the amount of heartbreak this town would go through.

These are opportunities young athletes – especially the seniors – will never be able to get back.

Schools are currently being closed around the country and USD 416 is in conversations with the state about what the next step should be.

Luckily, Louisburg just started Spring Break and will be out of school for the next 10 days. Still, this virus still figures to linger for longer than that.

So what is the next step?

The news is constantly changing by the hour and no one really knows what is next. All we can do right now is follow the guidelines and hope for the best.

No, not hope – pray.