

BACK TO CRICKET FRAMEWORK FOR COVID-19 ENVIRONMENT



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1. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

NTCA	North Texas Cricket Association
ICC	International Cricket Committee
USA Cricket	National Sports Body governing Cricket in USA
	and a member of the USOC
USOC	United States Olympics Committee
Community members	Community and individual participants,
	parents/guardians of participants, coaches,
	spectators, officials and volunteers
Other Personnel	Staff, coaches, officials, umpires
Clubs	Participating NTCA member organizations,
	made up of teams, members
CDC	Center for Disease Control
DSHS	Texas Department of State Health Services
WHO	World Health Organization
COVID-19	The clinical disease state resulting from an
	infection with SARS-CoV-2
SARS-CoV-2	Virus causing COVID-19
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
NTCA EC	North Texas Cricket Association Executive
	Committee
NTCA OC	North Texas Cricket Association Operations
	Committee



2. INTRODUCTION

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, all sports including cricket have suffered a great deal due to the lockdown restrictions placed on society which has halted the sport since Spring break (March 2020). The halt has affected the nurturing and development of talent that will go on to represent the USA cricket team in future significantly. The resumption of cricket in a COVID-19 environment can contribute as a step towards the establishment of normalcy and serve as a confidence and morale boost to both the cricket and sporting community. Sports organizations like NTCA are faced with complex decisions to make to provide a safe environment for operating and managing cricket competition and development in this new normal.

Due to the newness of COVID-19 and the limited research and knowledge among athletic community, North Texas Cricket Association (NTCA) has developed an operational framework to manage and operate the cricket league in the DFW metro region after careful review of guidelines provided by CDC, Texas Health Department, International Cricket Committee (ICC), local city parks and recreation and other sporting bodies etc. This is an ever-evolving framework that will be updated periodically based on learnings and best practices.

The NTCA framework is a minimum set of baseline standards, for "how" reintroduction of cricket will happen in a cautious and phased manner in the North Texas DFW metroplex region, using available evidence for the safety of the community. The goal is to meet the Texas Department of State and Health Services (DSHS) guidelines for adult recreational Sports leagues and its members.

Decisions regarding "when" the activities resume, or any "halt" to the activities "must" be made in consultation with Texas Department of Health Services, and local city parks and recreation departments. The priority is always to preserve public health and minimize community transmission.

3. GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE RESUMPTION OF CRICKET

1. Community Well-Being

- a. The NTCA's priority is the well-being of the entire cricket community in the DFW metroplex region.
- b. Resumption of NTCA competition is subject to a safe environment without compromising the health of everyone involved, based on objective health information to ensure they are conducted safely and do not risk increased COVID-19 local transmission rates.
- c. The safety and well-being of the Dallas community will be the priority in the decisionmaking process for NTCA Cricket in the COVID-19 environment.

2. Follows Government & Health Department Advice

a. Resumption of cricket follows the Government (Federal/State/County/City) guidance on the timing of introduction of various levels of sport participation regarding local epidemiology, risk mitigation strategies and public health capacity.



- Accordingly, the resumption of cricket is being planned as per the directive issued by the Governor of the State of Texas for outdoor sports activities effective 31st May 2020 and meeting the DSHS guidelines.
- c. Specific exemptions and approval to restart cricket is required from the respective State/County/City Local Public Health Departments.

3. Leadership and impact

- a. Cricket can play a leadership role in combatting the global pandemic by providing positive role models for society.
- b. Cricket can play a positive role by providing a sense of normalcy to individuals and can contribute many health – physical and mental, economic, social and cultural benefits in the local community emerging from the COVID-19 environment.
- c. NTCA as the local cricket organization managing Cricket in the North Texas region is looking to provide clear directions to everyone involved in the reboot of Cricket in this region.

4. NTCA FRAMEWORK

Cricket is a non-contact team sport played outdoors and the risks and exposure to COVID-19 differ. The game of cricket has specific risks to consider alongside the health guidelines issued by CDC, and the state and city health departments in the State of Texas.

NTCA has created the framework to help educate the cricket community about the risks of COVID-19 and playing in this environment. NTCA Framework follows the both the health and cricket recommendations made by CDC, DSHS, ICC, local parks guidelines and other sports bodies. '**Get in, Get out**' strategy to limit time and person-to-person contact on site is the goal. As a result, changes to the NTCA playing conditions are warranted and the NTCA Framework looks to address the changes for playing in COVID-19 environment. All members are required to review the NTCA Framework and additional documentation.

The NTCA framework for resumption of Cricket in COVID-19 environment covers:

- 1. Government restrictions
- 2. Cricket specific risk and mitigation approach
- 3. Preparation for cricket resumption
- 4. Return to cricket
- 5. Agreed protocol for a possible case of COVID-19

4.1 **GOVERNMENT RESTRICTIONS**

To get back to Cricket for training and competition, NTCA will be taking the following steps besides following Government and local parks issued guidelines.

1. Request approval from the State of Texas Department of Health and the local parks to resume cricket activities. (Not required anymore as per updated guidelines)



2. Follow the Government and Parks issued Adult Sports leagues operations and individual safety guidelines for safe operation in COVID-19 environment.

<u>Texas DSHS - Adult Sports League Operators - Minimum Checklist</u> <u>Texas DSHS - Adult Rec Sports Participant Checklist</u>

- 3. Work with City Parks and recreation departments to ensure facility safety for meeting the guidelines. The sporting environment should be assessed to ensure precautions are taken to minimize risk to those participating in sport and those attending as spectators (where and when permissible).
- 4. At all times NTCA will respond to the directives of Public Health Departments. Localized outbreaks may require NTCA to again enforce lockdown restrictions. The detection of a positive COVID-19 case(s) in a sporting or recreation organization will result in a standard public health response, which could include quarantine of a whole team or large group, and close contacts, for the required period.

4.2 CRICKET SPECIFIC RISKS

1. Proximity of players during a game and the use of shared facilities

Cricket requires players to be in close proximity at times and involves the use of shared facilities. Therefore, should a team member or opponent develop any CV-19 symptoms or be found to develop an infection, participants will require isolation and testing as they are most likely to have been in close contact.

2. Cricket ball - A potential transmission medium

Although Cricket is not a contact sport, the cricket ball is a potential transmission medium and rules should be applied around the management of the ball. The cricket ball comes in contact on the playing field and touched by players throughout the course of a game.

3. On-field Behavior

On-field behavior that includes celebrations with body contact, proximity during coin toss, team huddles can reduce the social distance and can pose a risk. Players should be encouraged to take responsibility for their own items (sunglasses, cap, helmet, gloves, jackets, towels etc.) and instructed against handing over any items to umpires or teammates.

4. Shared Equipment

Shared use of drink bottles, towels and team equipment can pose a risk in cricket and should be strongly discouraged. Players are strongly encouraged to use individual personal equipment. Ensure any shared equipment is thoroughly disinfected before and after use.

5. Participant Vulnerability

Participants, umpires, match referees and support staff may be considered vulnerable individuals that are at higher risk of severe illness due to CV-19. This includes older individuals (approx. 60+) and people of any age with underlying medical conditions such as cardiac, kidney, diabetes, obesity, weak innate immunity, etc.

Cricket is officiated by umpires on the field of play and their health and well-being needs to be taken into full consideration as they spend the greatest amount of time in close proximity to players.



The risks associated with team sports are such that, for the foreseeable future, if recommenced should limit those present to the minimum required to support the participants (ex. Youth player - 1 parent or guardian per child if necessary).

International evidence to date is suggestive that outdoor activities are a lower risk setting for COVID-19 transmission.

4.3 PREPARE TO RESTART

Prior to resumption of league competition, NTCA and the member clubs will begin preparing the players, umpires, officials, and any other personnel for a safe return through education and awareness. All members review and follow the NTCA framework, and the other good links for safe hygiene practices.

4.3.1 EDUCATION

To reduce the risk of COVID-19, education about risk mitigation strategies is important. NTCA and the clubs/teams take the safety of its cricketers and other personnel seriously and trying to ensure everyone has a clear understanding of the health risks. NTCA believes in education to improve health literacy around COVID-19 to promote and set expectations for required behavior prior to resumption. Education measures include:

- Education material for players and other personnel to promote COVID-19 understanding and required behaviors (e.g. regular and thorough handwashing, covering mouth and nose with a tissue or sleeve during coughing/sneezing). Suggested CDC, WHO and other health resources:
 - How to Protect Yourself and Others (COVID-19)
 - <u>Social-Distancing</u>
 - Hand washing guidance
 - <u>Keep that cough under cover</u>
 - Self-isolation (self-quarantine) for coronavirus (COVID-19)
 - Advice for people at risk of coronavirus (COVID-19)
 - <u>COVID-19 Symptoms</u>
 - Coronavirus (COVID-19) resources
 - Review and print <u>CDC COVID-19 Posters</u>
- Education of players and other personnel on required sports activities specifically Cricket related behavior to follow in the COVID-19 environment.
 - <u>Consideration for Sports Activities</u>
 - ICC Back to Cricket

4.3.2 ASSESSMENT OF PLAYING ENVIRONMENT

The specific considerations for a safe resumption of formal training and competition will be dependent on the environment. NTCA being an adult sports league has youth as well as senior adult members as well as family members living with the player who may belong to a at-risk



vulnerable group depending on their age, health conditions. Based on this understanding, the 2020 NTCA tournament can only be conducted with voluntary individual player consent. Each player will be required to educate himself about playing in COVID-19 environment and agree to sign a NTCA participation waiver form (in-progress. Will be emailed to clubs in advance before restart of season).

NTCA has created the following questionnaire for preliminary assessment of availability to be answered by each city ground representative, club/teams, and players.

NTCA has created the following questionnaire for preliminary assessment of availability. Considerations are:

Ground Availability

- Do you have a start date announced by your city for outdoor team sports?
- Is your park safe enough to restart cricket?
- Does your park meet the DSHS Health protocols for grounds and facilities?
- Does your park meet the DSHS Health protocols for adult recreation sports facilities?
- Cleanliness and Good Hygiene Park facilities (Ground reps must work with city to determine if the health protocols can be met adequately)
 - Are there shared facilities?
 - Bathrooms/Change rooms
 - Communal areas
 - Bleachers
 - Are the shared facilities kept open to minimize contact by touch (ex. Door knobs) ?
 - What is the protocol and frequency of cleaning shared facilities?
 - Handwashing facilities
 - Are there any facilities to regularly wash hands?
 - Availability of Soaps / Sanitizers at prominent places around the facility?
 - Does the parks management mark the boundaries and infield 30 yard circles?
 - If not, can you explain to the city that this will minimize the task of players setting up flags/cones which may come in contact with multiple players during the course of the game.

> Club/Team Availability

- Is your club/team(s) ready to return to league competition in 2020?
- How many members per team are ready to participate? (summarize based on individual feedback)
- Is your team ready to play if tournament rules are open to allow players from other clubs?

> Player Availability

• As a player are you ready to play in the 2020 season starting in July 2020?



- Do you agree to play under the NTCA framework and comfortable following the DSHS participant health protocols?
- Do you carry a Personal Health Insurance coverage?
- If you are ready to play, what format(s) are you available to play?
 - ODI (based on current divisional over limits)
 - o T20
 - Shorter alternatives (T10 / 6 a Side)
 - o NONE

4.3.3 NTCA OPERABILITY GUIDELINES

- NTCA Operations (EC, OC) and Clubs/Ground reps to determine if the park has the required facilities for safe operation in the COVID-19 environment. Depending on each park meeting the minimum checklist, NTCA will schedule and play matches in the parks. NTCA will work with the ground reps and city to make sure player safety is the priority.
- Good Hygiene and cleanliness of common facilities (ex. restrooms, change rooms etc.) is a must. It is hard to guarantee complete cleanliness that meets everyone's expectations. Under these circumstances, it is important for all participants to take adequate precaution, inspect and use the facility upon satisfying adequately.
- Any tasks that can be done at home, should be done at home (e.g. classroom training, online meetings). Significantly enhanced risk mitigation (including avoidance and physical distancing) must be applied for any activity associated with Cricket (ex. Indoor practice, classrooms, team meetings etc.).
- Implementation of Match report for each team submitted to NTCA OC could help us get team list (helpful in the event of contact tracing), ensure everyone performed the pre-game health check, and collect information on the effectiveness of the NTCA framework and areas for improvements or worst case determine if its going to really be feasible to continue playing safely.

4.4 RETURN TO CRICKET

4.4.1 NTCA SAFETY NORMS

- NTCA to assess grounds, teams, and player availability to determine tournament in reminder of 2020.
- NTCA to take a phased approach and tentatively resume full competition (in compliance with DSHS approval) in mid-July.
- > To keep the load and intensity managed in a safe manner, smaller tournament to restart the season is considered in first stage.
- Based on the effectiveness and evidence that the teams and players are able to participate and play without an increase in the transmission rates, trusting each players ability to adhere to the norms, progression to next stage (competition) will begin. This will be tentatively planned but the start is subject to success of first stage.



- Each player/umpire must undergo screening for COVID-19 prior to game. Each player or the team captain or a designated team member must have each player review the DSHS Health protocol for participants and record the information. A player not meeting the criteria will be ineligible to play. Each player/team must carry a thermal scan thermometer that can be used without contact. Clean before and after use.
- > Therefore, should a team member or opponent develop any COVID-19 symptoms or be found to develop an infection, participants will require isolation and testing as they are most likely to have been in close contact.
- DSHS Health protocol highly recommends players from a team not mixing outside with teams.
 Keep intra/inter team social distancing and minimize your exposure to safe environment only.
- > It is advisable for each player to bring your own chairs/mats to sit and avoid common use bleachers, seats etc., without prior cleaning.
- Bring your own personal hygiene kits (Hand Sanitizer, hand soaps, disinfectant wipes/liquids, napkins, gloves, masks etc.) and minimize use of communal facilities before and after a game.
- > Everyone is expected to carry and wear masks when you are not on the playing field or if you are in close proximity of people.

4.4.2 BACK TO PLAY

> Social Distancing – Player Proximity

- Maintain social distance as much as possible. This is applicable to distancing of individual kits and seating when not in the field as well.
- Square Leg fielder to maintain 6 feet distance from striker's end umpire.
- Umpires must stand a minimum of 6-8 Feet behind the stumps. (In international cricket 6,8,10,12 feet markings are used. Umpires in NTCA can follow same practice)
- There is no restriction on players choice of wearing mask if they prefer. Players are advised to carry a mask or covering (cloth mask, bandana, gaiter) at all times and wear when they are in close proximity of others.
- We advise caution with prolonged wearing of masks/face cover during the game, which could be a health risk for an athletic sport like cricket played in hot weather conditions. If you are at safe social distance (> 6 Feet) the wearing of mask is not required. If you are in continued close proximity and wearing a mask as a result, discuss with your team captain to switch your field position allowing you to remove the mask/face covering.

Cricket Ball

- The cricket ball comes in contact on the playing field and touched by players throughout
- the course of a game. Avoid touching your face (eyes, nose, mouth) after touching the ball. If possible, carry personal hand sanitizer to use after touching the ball.
- Wash and/or hand sanitize during breaks.
- Disinfect Cricket ball during drinks/refreshment breaks under umpire's supervision only. Due to the nature of the cricket ball, not all areas can be guaranteed to be completely disinfected.



- Only use alcohol/disinfectant wipes or a paper/cloth napkin with alcohol, or hand sanitizer spread gently to wipe the ball (Spraying disinfectant directly on the ball or using an extremely wet napkin to soak the ball is prohibited)
- Restricting use of Saliva or sweat to shine cricket ball. Bowlers/Fielders are only allowed to shine the ball by rubbing on trouser or clothing.
- Pass the ball directly back to the bowler and minimize contact with multiple hands.
- After a wicket, immediately leave the ball next to stumps at the non-striker's end and inform umpire. Do not give to the umpire.

> On-Field/Off-Field Protocols

- Avoid on-field behavior that includes celebrations with body contact (High-Five, fist bumps etc.).
- No handling of cap, helmet, gloves, jackets, towels, sunglasses, or personal items to umpires or teammates. Each player is responsible for their own items and instructed against handing over any items.
- When a team wants to huddle, maintain social distance, and avoid contact. The speaker in the huddle is recommended to wear mask.
- During coin-toss maintain social distancing norms. Only the Home team captain handles the coin.
- Players are recommended to consider keeping personal coolers/bags and close to playing field boundary for easy access to drinks or personal items.
- Everyone (players, umpires) is advised to carry personal hand sanitizer to use after touching ball or any other object (stumps, bails etc.).
- Require players to wash and/or hand sanitize during breaks.
- In the interest of the safety of players and any community member using the parks, all players are advised to avoid smoking (cigarettes, e-cigarettes etc.), spitting (Saliva, chewing gum, chewable tobacco products etc.). Follow park instructions for designated areas for smoking.
- In the event of multiple matches conducted AM/PM, the incoming and outgoing teams are expected to maintain social distance and every effort to 'Get In, Get Out' must be made.

> Cricket Umpires/Scorers

- Umpires can wear gloves. Avoid touching your face after touching any object, ball etc.
- Only touch the ball if necessary, with gloves.
- Umpires likewise are advised to carry and wear mask when they are in close proximity of players. Umpires wearing eyewear, or sunglasses are advised to remove mask during the over when a ball is bowled. This is to avoid fogging of glasses which can impair the vision.
- For any umpire who must wear glasses, he is advised to stand further back, maintaining social distance without mask.
- Scorer maintain social distancing. Scorers to maintain their own cricclubs login and use their personal device for scoring. Avoid sharing scoring device. To minimize any potential scoring error, only swap scorer role between over or at the break, exiting properly from



scoring application, so new scorer can continue accurately from where the previous scorer left off.

> Shared Equipment

- Before and after innings, bowling team to disinfect and clean the stumps and bails. Have fielding team make stump and bail adjustments. Umpires to avoid adjusting the stumps and bails.
- No sharing of drink bottles, food, and towels. All players are advised to bring their own drinks, food, towels etc.
- No sharing of equipment without an appropriate cleaning protocol. If shared cricket equipment is used, the team must ensure thorough disinfecting of equipment before and after use.
- Sanitize personal equipment before and after use.

> On-Field Compliance

- USA Cricket recommends having one official per team appointed. NTCA recommends each team captain, vice-captain or a designated member from the playing XI be responsible for ensuring compliance of the NTCA COVID-19 guidelines. The designated individual will be responsible for ensuring compliance as this maybe required in the event of contact tracing.
- Match reports must be updated with compliance information.
- NTCA Operations to develop protocol for handling deliberate and/or repeated transgressions by team or player.

> Player Waiver

• NTCA members participating in cricket in the COVID-19 environment will be required to sign an assumption of risk, release and waiver of liability and indemnity agreement relating to COVID-19 exposure, liability and risks. NTCA is working with USA Cricket for the NTCA player liability waiver which meets the local state laws and provisions.

> Participant Vulnerability

- Participants, umpires, match referees and support staff may be considered vulnerable individuals that are at higher risk of severe illness due to CV-19. This includes older individuals (approx. 60+) and people of any age with underlying medical conditions such as cardiac, kidney, diabetes, obesity, weak innate immunity, etc.
- The risks associated with team sports are such that, for the foreseeable future, if recommenced should limit those present to the minimum required to support the participants (ex. Youth player 1 parent or guardian per child if necessary).
- International evidence to date is suggestive that outdoor activities are a lower risk setting for COVID-19 transmission.
- Minimize any spectators (less than 10 people) and ensure they follow social distancing.

4.4.3 AGREED PROTOCOL FOR A POSSIBLE CASE OF COVID-19

In an environment of community transmission of COVID-19, any individual with respiratory symptoms should be considered a possible case of COVID-19. NTCA will adhere to the DSHS adult sports league protocols for managing unwell athlete/other personnel as a potential COVID-19 case



until COVID-19 has been excluded and they have been medically cleared by a doctor to return to the training environment. All athletes/other personnel will be made aware not to attend the game if they are unwell with any of the following symptoms or if they show the symptoms at the ground (even if only mild):

- Cough
- Sore throat
- Fever (e.g. night sweats or chills, measured temperature > 100 F.)
- Shortness of breath

Unwell player/other personnel must follow the Health protocols and must have clearance from a health care professional before return to cricket before or during the cricket season.

Players must notify NTCA Operations (EC, OC) and his club if they fall sick. Sickness could occur away from Cricket prior to a game or immediately after a game. Until medically cleared the player is to follow the health protocols and restricted from participation in NTCA.

In the event of NTCA being notified within 48 hours after the game, NTCA OC will review and inform the playing teams, and umpires, so they can follow the required health protocols for coming in contact with a sick player, enter into isolation and get tested. The eligibility of the team for participation in the next game is subject to having a playing XI that tests negative for COVID-19 and ready to play. NTCA OC will consider suspending the next game(s) and inform their opponents. The umpires must also undergo testing and report the status (negative or positive test) for further participation.

In the event of additional contact between the affected player and other members of his club, depending on the scope of impact, the games involving the club could be suspended.

If the impact is to 3 or more teams, NTCA Operations will review and determine the next course of action. NTCA will work with DSHS and the city parks to determine further actions including but not limited to suspension of upcoming games or tournament or season.

NTCA Operations will notify the league with list of teams affected and games impacted NLT Friday noon. Due to confidentiality of health information, the individual name will not be published or shared. Extreme care must be taken to ensure that the protocols are followed by everyone in NTCA during communication including the NTCA website, or social media platform.

Document step by step process to follow in the event of COVID impact in NTCA.

5. CONCLUSION

As the sports world looks to reel back to action, the fact remains we are faced with a new normal. The sport of cricket as we know is going to change in the way we play, perceive and act. There are simply too many things for a sports organization to grasp. The fact remains that every organization starts somewhere and comes up with their own processes which are bound to change as we learn.



As a regional league, NTCA is limited and dependent on the national/international cricket bodies as well as the State and local city health and sports authorities for directions in the event of an outbreak, whether it occurs during the game or immediately after a game. NTCA strongly advises its members to consider this document as a reference guide and for critical direction both NTCA and its members should follow the DSHS and local health authorities for guidance.



6. **REFERENCES / USEFUL LINKS**

DSHS Open Texas Website

Texas DSHS - Adult Sports League Operators - Minimum Checklist

Texas DSHS - Adult Rec Sports Participant Checklist

CDC Parks Rec Guidelines

ICC Back to Cricket Guidelines

USA Cricket - Return To Cricket Guidelines

Australian Institute of Sports - Reboot Framework

Consideration for Sports Activities

CDC COVID-19 Posters