



780-695-6909

info@spartansoccer.ca

PB Box 23043 Citadel, St. Albert, AB, T8N 6Z9

January 30, 2021

Attention: Government of Alberta/Alberta Health Services [COVID-19 Response]

To whom it may concern:

We are writing today to ask for clarification and consideration as it relates to an outdoor (adult) sport participation. With the new Path Forward (effective February 8, 2021), our organization is asking for more information around the differences between outdoor and indoor sport regulations, and how this was considered in the new relaunch strategy.

As the Executive Director and owner of Spartan Soccer in Edmonton, AB, I am looking to understand and follow all regulations so we can continue effectively offering adult recreation in a safe environment. Prior to COVID-19, we ran indoor and outdoor soccer and exercise programs for adults in the region. From our understanding, both indoor and outdoor sport have very different risks associated with exercise and air exposure, and should be considered different (both in risk levels and allowable participation). Our intention is to work within the framework of Alberta Health Services and the Government of Alberta regulations, guidelines and restrictions as it relates to adult sport participants as they return to full activities in the new normal.

Spartan Soccer is and has been committed to following all Alberta Health Services and Government of Alberta regulations and guidelines for COVID-19 prevention. We stopped indoor league soccer in early 2020 as per AHS, and did not initiate outdoor league soccer in the spring; when acceptable, we initiated cohort team outdoor exercise sessions (reducing the number of participants as regulations were adjusted: including maximum numbers for team participants to under 30 in spring/summer 2020, to small gatherings in mid-2020—free soccer in cohorts, to snow soccer with limited number of participants in a pass-first and less invasive environment, adding socially distanced hiking, and a full cancellation of programs in late-2020 as aligned with government rules). As benchmarks are achieved, we are looking at a phased in approach to help members improve their fitness and minimize any health risks (both for COVID-19 and for mental/physical well-being) as restrictions are lifted. Please note that we were the only organization to not initiate a regular indoor program in the late 2020 season as we concluded the risk was too high and that any such attempt would be short-lived

Exercise is important, and we recognize a phased in approach needs to consider adult participation with valuable physical and mental health benefits during this trying time. Our suggestion is to split indoor and outdoor regulations so it is appropriate and allows the safest outcomes for all participants—while allowing appropriate outlets for adults to stay healthy.

<p><i>Indoor Adult Sport</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Current state</u> - not allowed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Indoor group physical activities are prohibited unless: ◦ the activity involves students at a school or post-secondary institution as part of an education program ◦ the activity involves students at a post-secondary institution • Previous states - limited participants (masks to access the venue, wipe down of balls and dressing rooms/benches to limit exposure) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ tracking numbers for participants ◦ health checks before entry to facilities ◦ no fans or other interactions, and ◦ limitations on team interactions (including pausing games if too many interactions are inside the two metre regulations) • Acknowledging that indoor sport has a higher risk of transmission than outdoor and effectively fits with the current phased in approach, with full integration into Phase Four (and look forward to this) 	<p><i>Outdoor Adult Sport (and previous regulations/ limitations)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Current state</u> - a maximum of 10 people socially distanced at all times, so this means outdoor sport is not allowed either (but other distanced exercise is): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Outdoor team sports must also be limited to 10 people or fewer and two metre distancing must be maintained at all times (and this is challenging specifically for soccer) • Previous states - cohorts of less than 50 and 20 participants from the same group, considering <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ outdoor sport and exercise is less risk than indoor sports ◦ soccer allows for a two metre distancing in most interactions ◦ the ball is not touched with hands/sweat in most cases as someone engages on the ball, they are within the two metre range, but only typically as challenging the ball • Challenging outdoor participation, since it is in open air, should have different considerations than indoor participation • We are hoping a well-managed cohort program could be launched in Phase Three (if appropriate) • We have used a snow soccer cohorts program (in Oct.-Dec. 2019), aimed at limiting ball challenges—focused on a pass-first mentality. This, along with limiting cohort size and managing the group size (to approx. 7-10 participants per side, still has limited times where participants are within two metres) this obviously includes some ball challenges, but more passing in an outdoor, open-air, exercise-first environment—mainly exercising in the elements and fresh air)
---	---

In terms of clarification, we understand there is a difference between indoor and outdoor participation, and that open air transmission is significantly lower risk than indoor facilities

(understanding that outdoor soccer and winter “snow” soccer will still include some ball interactions within two metres). However, since there is a difference between the indoor and outdoor environment, we would like to request outdoor participation in specific and managed cohorts to be considered for an earlier phase (considering all soccer will always have some ball challenges, but most of the time members of the cohort are better distanced in snow soccer).

For outdoor participation (prior to the current shutdown), all participants in Spartan Soccer aim to maintain a two metre distancing whenever possible and are encouraged to limit any close contact while participating, including before and after the activity (wearing masks to-and-from the activity, as well as when dressing and warming up). With snow soccer Spartan Soccer limits (limited) numbers (approx. 4-10 participants per side); the plan is to continue this practice once restrictions are lifted to ensure safe exercise, and with these precautions taken, ensuring limited contact to equipment, reducing contact within the two metre regulations (coaching participants to limit ball work and reducing their use of arms/shoulders or aggressive ball challenges to limit close interactions), and this helps ensure minimum contact with maximum exercise outcomes. In conjunction with not allowing anyone identifying possible COVID-19 symptoms to participate, and making sure cohorts are wearing masks when not participating/changing, helps ensure we all work collaboratively with recommendations and regulations to ensure the safest return to sport.

Thank you for the overwhelming hard work and putting together a plan that appears to be effective in our relaunch of the province (even though it appears indoor and outdoor sport participation for adults seems to be considered in conjunction instead of separately); hopefully the questions and clarification I have raised can be considered so we are completely clear on guidelines and restrictions to go forward with the best path. And that a return to activity allows for consideration and modifications to keep the risk of transmitting and contacting COVID-19 while still allowing adults the opportunity to choose fitness and exercise activities that are beneficial (including outdoor soccer cohorts, as appropriate).

Please note that we are migrating to a new domain (spartan.soccer) and there may be a blip with the current email address during transition. It should automatically convert from info@spartansoccer.ca to info@spartan.soccer without issue, but I wanted to give you an alert.

Sincerely,

Teo Zanetic, MBA
Executive Director and League Owner
Spartan Soccer
e: info@spartansoccer.ca
w: spartansoccer.ca