

DHS Fall Sports Summary

During the Fall 2007 season, DHS fielded 13 interscholastic teams (excluding Girls Volleyball and Swimming which use indoor facilities) comprised of approximately 415 athletes. (This represents a 9.2% increase over Fall 2006) This number includes varsity, JV and freshman teams in Football, Boys and Girls Soccer, Girls Field Hockey and Boys & Girls Cross Country. (see attached summary for details). Despite the opening of all fields in the DHS Oval, varsity turf Baseball field and varsity Softball field in Spring/Summer 2007, no DHS team has been allocated a field exclusively dedicated to that team's practice; this means that each field may be used by a minimum of two, and in some cases more, DHS teams during one practice time slot. Student athletes who are not able to use a full field for practice often lack the endurance required for a game played on a full field. Additionally, practice on a full field allows the coach to implement game strategies for the team in an authentic setting. After the start of interscholastic competition, when practice schedules shift to the afternoons, field overcrowding is substantially increased unless the varsity and JV teams in two different sports are scheduled to play away on the same day.

During fall 2007 all Darien High School Fields including the DHS Stadium, DHS Turf II, DHS Softball, DHS Baseball, DHS Fields 1, 2 and 3 and the Tennis Court Field were open. Fields at Darien High School are reserved for high school activities, including physical education classes, on Monday – Friday until 2:00 p.m. From 2:00 p.m. until 6:00 p.m. the high school fields are used chiefly by the high school teams. From 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. the fields are used by youth athletic leagues, with the exception of times when a DHS home soccer, field hockey or cross country game, is scheduled.

The following example illustrates field usage and limitations experienced by high school teams.

In season, JV and Varsity soccer play 2-3 games per week; matches are generally played at the same time with Boys soccer playing on alternating days from Girls soccer (e.g. Boys on Monday and Wednesday, Girls on Tuesday & Thursday); Freshman soccer plays fewer interscholastic games (10 games versus 16/17 games for JV/V) alternating home & away with their respective Varsity and JV teams.

Due to a shortage of qualified referees, Varsity and JV field hockey games must regularly be scheduled back-to-back on the same field (e.g. 3:45pm and 5:45pm start times). Like soccer, freshman field hockey plays fewer matches per season and home games are scheduled when JV & Varsity matches are away.

Home games throughout the season for all sports teams (with the exception of football) are generally scheduled to begin at or close to 4:00 p.m. This time frame allows for just enough day light time for the traveling team to reach DHS, to warm-up on the field (generally from 3:00 pm or 3:15 p.m. to start time) and to complete the game safely before dusk. Should a team arrive late due to traffic conditions the schedule described

above is compromised. It should be noted that area high schools are increasingly reluctant to grant early release time to accommodate sports schedules.

Such scheduling effectively eliminates the usefulness of any game field for any other practice for the day. When a game is scheduled on the stadium turf, oval turf or oval grass fields, teams who regularly practice on these fields must shift to and share an alternative field. For example, scheduling of back-to-back field hockey matches on the stadium turf, requires that the 47 varsity & junior varsity football players share the DHS Field #2 with the 45 freshman football players. Similarly, if the Girls Varsity and JV soccer teams are playing matches at the Oval Turf and MMS Lower, the 46 Boys Varsity and JV soccer players must practice together on the Oval Field #1.

The Varsity & JV football teams play home games on Saturdays; the freshman football plays offsite at Royle elementary school with a 3:45 pm kickoff.

Freshman teams have historically carried larger rosters to allow more participation in their first year of interscholastic competition. Many JV and varsity teams now carry rosters with 1 1/2 to 2 times the required athletes to accommodate more athletes. This exacerbates the overcrowding of practice fields.

At the very beginning of the fall interscholastic season, longer daylight hours permit the scheduling of back-to-back practices for different teams on some of the high school fields. However by mid-September the loss of daylight generally reduces scheduled practices for DHS teams to one shift beginning shortly after school dismissal until approximately 5:30-6:00pm.

Although all athletes returned to the DHS site for practices as of fall 2007, some soccer games are still played at MMS Upper and MMS Lower. Until the opening of the oval fields in Fall 2007, many teams (as has been the practice during DHS construction) practiced off-site at Middlesex (both the Upper & Lower) and Town Hall. The use of MMS fields by the DHS athletes had an adverse effect on the MMS intramural program in terms of participant numbers and program structure. The MMS intramural program begins in mid-September with a six-week soccer program followed by approximately six-weeks of flag football.

The opening of the Darien High School fields has allowed the athletic department to consider for the first time, student interest in an outdoor program of intra mural or non-conference sports such as rugby or ultimate frisbee.

No natural grass fields are being rested during the Fall 2007, yet we have been advised that it is important to rest fields on a rotating basis to ensure proper maintenance. Ideally, one field will be taken off line each spring and will remain unscheduled throughout the spring and summer. This will ensure that each field is allowed to rest once every three years.

DHS Spring Sports Summary

During the Spring 2007 season, DHS fielded 14 interscholastic teams on site comprised of an estimated 370 athletes (excluding golf, tennis, sailing which practice off-site and Boy's volleyball which uses the gym). This number includes Varsity, JV and Freshman teams in Boy's Baseball, Girl's Softball, Boy's & Girl's Lacrosse and Track. (see attached summary for details).

The completion of the Varsity and JV softball fields and the Varsity and JV Baseball field during 2007, will allow the return of these teams from offsite practice locations (Town Hall & Holohan, respectively) in Spring 2008. This will leave only the freshman softball and baseball teams possibly practicing offsite. Relocation of the Varsity and Junior Varsity softball team back to DHS will eliminate the need for a temporary outfield fence on the Town Hall field, thereby allowing this field to be used during the weekends by Darien youth sports.

Like the fall field sports, the six DHS Lacrosse teams must share the remaining five full size fields (2 turf and 2 grass at DHS plus the MMS Lower field) and the smaller practice field in the oval. After the start of interscholastic competition, field overcrowding increases unless, by chance, several of the Lacrosse teams are scheduled to play away on the same day. The effects of overcrowding on the athletes' stamina and implementation of game strategies, as noted in the fall sports summary, are further complicated by the risk of flying sticks and fast moving balls for lacrosse players on an overcrowded field. These risks necessitated the installation of fencing to divide the fields in the DHS oval during Spring 2007.

Existing field dimensions limit Girl's Lacrosse competition to the DHS Stadium Field and MMS Lower often necessitating the scheduling of back-to-back JV and Varsity games as available light permits when other teams have scheduled home games. Although an earlier conversion to daylight savings time (March 10th in 2007) helps the spring sports teams, most of this extra field time is offset by longer daily practice schedules for lacrosse as compared to soccer and field hockey.

In season, JV and Varsity Lacrosse play 2-3 games per week, including weekends. Varsity and JV teams often (although not always) play on the same days either at the same time on different fields or back-to-back (daylight permitting). Unlike soccer, Boy's and Girl's Lacrosse do not alternate games days. Freshman lacrosse teams start their competition approximately two weeks later in the season and play about half as many games as Varsity and JV teams.

Home games throughout the season for all spring sports teams are generally scheduled around 4:00 p.m. – which allows sufficient time for the traveling team to reach DHS, adequate warm-up time for both teams on the field and sufficient daylight to complete the game in the earlier part of the season. This scheduling is especially critical for the Lacrosse teams, which sometimes play host to high schools outside of Fairfield County.

As in the fall sports season, such scheduling effectively eliminates the usefulness of the game field for any other DHS practice during the same day until near the end of the spring interscholastic season when sunset occurs after 8: 00 pm. When a game is scheduled on the stadium turf, oval turf or MMS Lower, teams who regularly practice on these fields must shift to and share an alternative field.