

# **A LATER SCHOOL DAY: MAKING IT WORK FOR ATHLETICS**

## **Introduction**

A later school day with a release time that is 40-45 minutes later than the present dismissal time will have an effect on the athletic program at Sharon High School. The current level of comfort should not hinder what is clearly in the best interest of our students' health though, and on the following pages we will outline what would change, as well as the steps that could be taken to ensure that the athletic program operates as effectively and efficiently as it does now. Having had an opportunity to personally speak with each of the other athletic directors in the Hockomock League about this possible change, we are confident that there are no insurmountable obstacles. That said, should a decision to move to a later start ultimately take place, we will work to ensure a smooth transition so that our student-athletes continue to benefit from their experiences in interscholastic competition.

## **I. Practices**

The vast majority of Sharon High School's teams begin practice shortly after school ends. Typically, these practices get started between 2:30 and 2:45. If school were to end at 2:45, however, practices would likely begin between 3:15 and 3:30.

For those teams that do not begin practices shortly after school (i.e. basketball and swimming), a change would probably be viewed very positively, as there would be less lingering time between the end of school and the start of practice.

In the fall, only the loss of daylight beginning in late October is a concern. Sailing and golf may lose some practice time, but given that the majority of the fall season is complete by the loss of significant daylight early in November, the impact is probably minimal.

In the winter and spring, there would be no impact on practices other than the later start time for practices that was previously mentioned.

## **II. Extra Help**

The window of time from when school ends to when practices begin would not change; therefore, student-athletes would still be able to see their teachers before heading to practice. The only days on which this access might be impacted are those on which the student-athlete's team is dismissed early or has an away contest and needs to depart immediately after school concludes.

Attention should also be given to the fact that the recent addition of Eagle Block into the daily schedule provides practically every student with 40 minutes of time in his/her school day to complete homework, conduct research, see his/her counselor, or see teachers for extra assistance. Prior to the current school year, this dedicated block of time did not exist. All students are expected to use this time wisely and productively on a daily basis, so Eagle Block can be extremely beneficial to student-athletes.

## **III. Extra-Curricular Clubs & Activities**

Student-athletes that participate in extra-curricular clubs and activities right after school (and before practice begins) would have the same amount of time allotted to partake in those activities that they have now. As previously noted, the only days on which this participation might be impacted are those on which the student-athlete's team is dismissed early or has an away contest and needs to depart immediately after school concludes.

#### **IV. Home Contests (1/2 of each season)**

Throughout the school year, the vast majority of teams would experience no change. Contests would still begin at 3:30 as they do currently.

As noted earlier, the loss of daylight beginning in late October is a concern for certain fall sports. Though the impact on practices is limited to sailing and golf, the impact on interscholastic competitions is slightly wider. Golf, JV field hockey, and freshmen and JV football are all affected to limited degrees. There are viable solutions, however, many of which have been instituted by other schools that have later start and end times.

Freshmen and JV football currently begin games at 2:45 (rather than 3:30) once the loss of daylight becomes a factor in late October. In these cases, we could:

- institute running times (clock doesn't stop) for all or part of the 2-3 remaining home games
- move the 2-3 remaining home games to a Saturday home double-header, as is already done annually with Oliver Ames prior to Thanksgiving
- change the 2-3 remaining home games to away games where lights are available; this would result in additional transportation costs though
- rent lights for approximately \$1,400 per event

JV field hockey currently plays after the varsity team finishes. Without another home field to play on, once the loss of daylight becomes a factor late in October, impending darkness will impact the 2-3 remaining home contests. In these cases, we could:

- shorten varsity and JV games
- play JV games on the same day as freshmen games and shorten the length of both of those contests
- play the JV games on days separate from when the varsity and freshmen normally play; this could possibly result in site changes, however, as well as additional transportation costs for whichever school travels
- rent lights for approximately \$1,400 per event

Golf currently hosts home matches at the Sharon Country Club. Arrangements may have to be made to start 1-2 home matches earlier than normal late in October. This would ensure that contests can be completed. Though an excellent working relationship is maintained, Sharon Country Club is under no obligation to accommodate our needs. If for reasons beyond our control, adjustments cannot be made, these student-athletes may require an early dismissal in isolated circumstances.

#### **V. Away Contests (1/2 of each season)**

With a 2:45 dismissal and a traditional starting time of 3:30, the vast majority of away contests will start later, and only JV field hockey, golf, and sailing in the fall have some added complexities. Assuming that teams leave Sharon High School by 3:00, competitions that usually begin at 3:30 are likely to start between 3:45 and 4:00 after our teams have had time to conduct a proper warm-up.

Closer destinations (Canton, Easton, Foxboro, Mansfield, Stoughton) have a higher probability of beginning contests closer to 3:45, while destinations that are further away (Attleboro, Franklin, King Philip, North Attleboro) and that take approximately 30 minutes to travel to, are more likely to start competitions at or around 4:00.

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As noted earlier, JV field hockey usually plays after the varsity team finishes. Once the loss of daylight becomes a factor late in October, impending darkness could impact the 2-3 remaining away contests. This

would not be the case at four of the schools (Canton, Franklin, Mansfield, and Oliver Ames) against whom we compete because they have a second field or lights. To offset some of the potential difficulties, we could:

- shorten varsity and JV games
- play JV games on the same day as freshmen games and shorten the length of both of those contests
- schedule away contests against Canton, Franklin, Mansfield, or Oliver Ames later in the season once the loss of daylight occurs, rather than earlier in the season when daylight is more prevalent
- play the JV games on days separate from when the varsity and freshmen normally play; this could possibly result in site changes, however, as well as additional transportation costs for whichever school travels

Golf and sailing in the fall (not spring) are the only other sports in which a later start/dismissal time is a concern, as the number of daylight hours and the location of away contests are beyond our control; therefore, both sports may periodically require early dismissals. Fortunately, this is limited to less than a handful of matches in each sport. An example might be when sailing has to travel to Manchester-Essex or St. John's (both north of Boston).

## **Closing**

It is our opinion that a later school start and dismissal time would not be detrimental to the athletic program. While all teams are impacted by later practice times, our student-athletes are sure to benefit from the extra sleep that they are sure to get. The research indicates that adolescents will be more alert and that they are more apt to find time to eat breakfast, something that does not always happen now with the 7:25 start. These variables alone provide some of the positive rationale for a move to a later start time.

Finally, keeping a possible change in perspective, it should be noted that while Hockomock League games typically start at 3:30, there are leagues around the Commonwealth that start their contests later, including the nearby Tri-Valley League which starts their contests at 3:45. Similarly, there are leagues around the state, like the Patriot and Bay State Leagues, which accommodate member schools that have instituted later start and dismissal times.

Respectfully submitted,

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