



# Sports Rehabilitation



## Winter Sports and COVID

By Jessica Ciborek, Physical Therapist

If you are reading this article and have kids who play sports, chances are pretty high they are currently participating in their sport, even during a global pandemic where a lot of schools are still virtual or hybrid. Think about that. Your child may not be able to attend school 5 days a week but is playing sports in proximity to their teammates and opponents. These truly unprecedented times leave families with tough decisions to make about their kids. My child played fall soccer, but that was outside. What about indoor basketball?

Winter sports are happening, along with most youth indoor sports leagues including Junior Olympic (JO) volleyball/gymnastics. Athletic directors, club directors and coaches have worked relentlessly to ensure the safest environment possible for their athletes to train efficiently, while crossing their fingers that COVID-19 stays far away from their teams.

I coach JO volleyball for Cleveland Volleyball Company's (CVC) 15 Black Team. Our club reopened Jan. 9 for the 2021 season, which is usually played until early July. We had not been open for any practices or training since March 2020 when the pandemic began. CVC continues to take a very cautious approach in managing their organization regarding COVID-19.

Club directors Dana Artman and Jill Pompei have stated multiple times that they want to be a part of the solution, not the problem, and want to be able to put their heads down on their pillows at night knowing they are doing everything they can to keep their coaches and athletes safe. Adjustments include: constant mask-wearing by everyone in the building, including athletes while playing; COVID waiver and liability form for all staff and players; COVID procedures for cleaning, sanitizing, building flow to maintain social distancing; and parent coordinators for all tournaments. The two biggest challenges are the personal responsibility keep our staff and athletes safe – and parents not wanting to get their children tested if they have a direct exposure in the community.

Grace Chambers, a freshman student-athlete at Magnificat High School and player on my CVC 15 Black Team has a positive approach to playing volleyball in the middle of a pandemic. "I feel very safe practicing and playing games due to masking and limiting the number of athletes in the building at one time," she said. "I haven't played tournaments yet, but I know that each tournament has many protocols in place to make them as safe as possible.

"The pandemic has taught me to appreciate being able to play and compete in the sport I love. I missed playing last spring when it was canceled and am so happy to be back with my team getting ready for this season. The pandemic has also taught me to be grateful for my family and appreciate all the extra time we spent together."

Finley Jerdonek, a sixth grader at Avon Middle School, plays football, basketball and lacrosse. "I feel pretty safe practicing and playing without a mask since we are distant most of the time," he shared. "The biggest challenge is to be able to practice and play and try not to get people sick. This pandemic has taught me to make what you can out of something."

Change is constant and definitely a term that has become all too familiar in the past 10 months. As Finley stated above, "Make what you can out of something ..." is exactly what sports organizations have been demonstrating as they work to keep student-athletes safe while playing the sports they love.