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An Interview with Kurt Gibson

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Tumultuous 2020 Oral History project

Interview # T20-A-L-2021-022

Kurt Gibson, the Associate Executive Director for the Illinois High School Association official during the COVID-19 pandemic, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Tumultuous 2020* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: May 28, 2021 Location: Bloomington, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Philip Pogue, ALPL volunteer

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

Total Pages: _____ Total Time: 1:13 / 1.22

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on July 13, 2021.

The interview is archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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Abstract

Kurt Gibson, *Tumultuous 2020*, T20-A-L-2021-022

Biographical Information/Overview of Interview: Kurt Gibson was born in Bloomington, Illinois in January 1966, and graduated from Belvidere High School in 1984. While in high school Kurt was active in golf, basketball and baseball as well as debate and student council, while also serving as editor of the school newspaper. Kurt received a BA degree in 1988 in speech, radio and television from Bradley University in Peoria, and an MS in education from Governors State University in Park Forest in 1994. After graduation, Kurt taught English and speech, while also coaching, first at Iroquois West, then Coal City, Manteno, and Hinckley-Big Rock. He also served as a middle school principal and athletic director at Manteno Middle School and then later Principal at Erie High School, in Erie, IL. Kurt joined the Illinois High School Association (IHSA) in 2002. At the time of the interview he was the Associate Executive Director supervising basketball, boys golf, bass fishing, and education/corporate sponsors. In the past Kurt also supervised softball, gymnastics, tennis, baseball, and the sports medicine advisory committee. In 2020 Kurt was inducted into the Illinois Basketball Coaches Association.

Gibson reviews the impact the COVID-19 pandemic had on sports in Illinois and the state restrictions placed upon the Illinois High School Association, its member schools, students and their communities. The interview covers the period from March 2020-May 2021. Kurt details how the complete shutdown of schools in mid-March 2020 led to the first ever cancellation of the state boys' basketball championship for all four classes. In addition, all championships for winter sports not completed by that date, while all spring sports were not able even to compete. He discusses the restrictions, rule changes, and challenges coaches and players faced in playing the limited schedule. Kurt also talked about a restricted fall season in boys golf and the restrictions placed on the recently completed Spring 2021 Bass Fishing state series. He reviews the challenges in having restricted seasons, communications with other state federations as well as the National Federation of High Schools, plans for sports and activities in the 2021-22 season, and relations with parents, student athletes, and school district officials.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Illinois High School Association; impact of COVID-19 pandemic on Illinois sports; cancellation of 2020 Illinois High School Boys' Basketball championships; canceling all sports/activities for the fall 2020 and spring 2021 seasons; Illinois Department of Public Health; National Federation of High Schools; change of venue for State basketball championships to University of Illinois; IHSA Board Meetings

Notes to the Reader: Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

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