

NFL will not hold live national anthem performances in 2020 due to COVID-19, per report

The league 'could also curtail the on-field access of live military and police honor guards'

The ongoing coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is expected to severely limit, if not eliminate, fan attendance at NFL games during the 2020 season, but fans won't be the only ones forced to experience game days outside of the stadium. According to Michael McCarthy of Front Office Sports, the NFL will not hold any live performances of the national anthem before games this season, and the league could also reduce the presence of military and police honor guards.

"The objective is to strictly limit the number of people on the sidelines who can potentially infect players and coaches with COVID-19," McCarthy reported. "By the same token, the league will also crackdown on the number of credentialed reporters and photographers with access to the playing field. Given the pandemic, the number of medical personnel on the sidelines will remain the same."

The "Star-Spangled Banner" will still be played before the start of each NFL game, McCarthy added, but instead of hosting performers on the field, the league "may ask performers to sing the anthem off-site, then pipe it live inside their stadium," or simply play pre-recorded versions of the song before kickoff.

This isn't expected to be the only change to anthem protocol in 2020. ESPN previously reported that the NFL also plans to play "Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing," traditionally known as the Black anthem, ahead of every Week 1 game across the league. NFL commissioner Roger Goodell has also publicly encouraged players to peacefully protest social injustice this year; most protesting players in recent years have used some form of demonstration during the anthem to raise awareness of issues like racism and police brutality.

Source:

<https://www.cbssports.com/nfl/news/nfl-will-not-hold-live-national-anthem-performances-in-2020-due-to-covid-19-per-report/>
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