



**REPORT OF THE
NCAA DIVISION I WOMEN'S BASKETBALL COMMITTEE
JULY 15-17, 2019, MEETING**

ACTION ITEMS.

1. Legislative items.

- None.

2. Nonlegislative items.

- a. Regional Site Selection. The NCAA Division I Women's Basketball Committee requests approval of a two-site regional format, effective for the 2023 championship and beyond.

Background: The Women's Basketball Committee agreed it was important for women's basketball to be included in the championship-wide bid process and that a review of regional format to include number of regional sites and strategy of locations (e.g., geographic representation) was necessary before the process begins in August 2019. The committee reviewed a comparative financial analysis, impact on student-athlete experience (e.g., on-site schedule, missed class time), broadcast partner availability and feedback, coaches survey feedback, minimum bid requirements, strategic opportunities and unintended consequences.

The NCAA Division I Women's Basketball Championship will be included in the NCAA championship site selection process to award predetermined regional sites for 2023, 2024, 2025 and 2026 and NCAA Women's Final Four sites for 2025 and 2026.

The committee reviewed the collected data and feedback at their July 15-17 meeting and prepared the recommendation below for approval by the Women's Basketball Oversight Committee.

Recommendation. The committee recommends adopting a two-site regional format with eight teams per site effective for the 2023 championship and beyond.

Moving to a two-site format would elevate and enhance the student-athlete experience, create opportunity for growth of our sport and championship through an increased focus on developing two regional markets annually, building the brand of women's basketball within the host cities, expanding established programming (e.g., Beyond the Baseline, Reading Program, Party on the Plaza), create new programming targeting strategic plan initiatives (e.g., coach and officiating pipelines, Women's Basketball Coaches Association programming, student-athlete health and well-being), provide

- opportunity to build a fan base around the sport of women's basketball and not just a team, and provide opportunity for the broadcast partner to gather content earlier and enhance the overall coverage of our championship at regionals through Women's Final Four.
- b. Automatic qualification for the 2020 championship. The committee recommended that the Division I Women's Basketball Oversight Committee award the following 32 conferences automatic qualification status for the 2020 championship: America East Conference; American Athletic Conference; Atlantic Coast Conference; Atlantic Sun Conference; Atlantic 10 Conference; Big East Conference; Big Sky Conference; Big South Conference; Big Ten Conference; Big 12 Conference; Big West Conference; Colonial Athletic Association; Conference USA; Horizon League; The Ivy League; Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference; Mid-American Conference; Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference; Missouri Valley Conference; Mountain West Conference; Northeast Conference; Ohio Valley Conference; Pac-12 Conference; Patriot League; Southeastern Conference; Southern Conference; Southland Conference; Southwestern Athletic Conference; The Summit League; Sun Belt Conference; West Coast Conference; and Western Athletic Conference.
- c. Increase in championship officiating fees. The committee recommended increasing championship game officials fees based on comparisons to current regular season fees and NCAA men's basketball tournament fees. The recommendation is to increase fees over a 3-year period to be in line with men's basketball fees for on-court officials by 2023.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS.

1. **Welcome and introduction of new committee members.** Rhonda Bennett called the meeting to order and the group welcomed Beth Goetz and Jill Shields as new committee members.
2. **Agenda overview and review of meeting schedule.** Andrea Gaither reviewed the meeting schedule and guests in attendance.
3. **Division I Women's Basketball Committee mission statement and conflict of interest policy.** The committee reviewed and affirmed the mission statement and conflict of interest policy as written in the committee manual.

4. **Vice president update.** Lynn Holzman provided updates to the committee on the 2019-2024 Strategic Plan, review of regional round format, NET development, playing rules update, mock selection, as well as Women's Basketball Oversight Committee topics that included Rice Commission evolution, coach credentialing pilot program, using technology during competition and multi-team event models. Ms. Holzman provided an update on planning for the 2020 NCAA Women's Final Four in preparation for a call with members of their local organizing committee the following day.
5. **Site Selection Subcommittee update.**
 - a. Regional format review update and recommendation. The committee recapped the discussion of the site selection subcommittee, who recommended the move to a two-site regional format with rationale supported by the women's basketball strategic plan. The committee voted and approved the recommendation from the site selection subcommittee to move to a two-site regional format, which were submitted to the women's basketball oversight committee for final review (see Action Item 2-a).
 - b. 2023, 2024, 2025 and 2026 Regional, 2025 and 2026 Women's Final Four site selection process. Meredith Cleaver reviewed the timeline and process for the bid cycle that will begin in late August across the championships department.
6. **RPI/Selection/Bracketing Subcommittee update.** Debbie Richardson gave an update on the newly titled Team Selection subcommittee. The group has received converted data from past championships for review. Google is doing an analysis of women's basketball statistics for the last ten years and will follow up with NET component recommendations. A meeting is being planned for the fall with Google and NCAA IT staff regarding next steps and establishment of timeline for implementation. Currently, anticipated implementation of NET is the 2020-21 season. The NCAA will work closely with the Women's Basketball Coaches Association (WBCA) on a communication timeline.
7. **Review of selection, seeding and bracketing policies and procedures.** The committee spent significant time reviewing the selection, seeding and bracketing policies and procedures, including challenges they have experienced in past brackets with any possible adjustments that could be applied. The committee voted and approved the following edits to the procedures for placing teams into the bracket:
 - a. The following principle was moved to the top of the list: "By order of the s-curve, the committee will assign each team to a regional and first-/second-round site by taking into account distance from site, mode of transportation and accessibility by fans."
 - b. The following principle was edited to: "A team, outside of the top four seed lines, may be moved one bracket line from its true seed line (e.g., from a No. 13 seed line to a No. 12 seed line) when it is placed in the bracket, if necessary to meet the principles."

- c. Additional Considerations for Placing Teams into the Championship Bracket. After adhering to all principles for placing teams in the bracket, the committee will take into consideration the following items:
 - Avoiding rematches of regular-season games in the first and second rounds.
 - Avoiding rematches of previous years' tournament games in the first and second rounds.
 - After examining the previous two years' brackets, the committee shall attempt to avoid moving teams or conferences out of its natural region or geographic area an inordinate number of times.
 - d. Additionally, the committee noted that the Rating Percentage Index (RPI) will remain the sole metric for team selection for the 2020 championship.
8. **Review of team selection communication timeline.** Rachel Kay reviewed the compiled timeline of bracket and top 16 releases of information by various staff members outside of the committee's selection room in March.
 9. **Conference related matters.**
 - a. Rick Nixon provided an update on the regional advisory committee (RAC) and conference monitoring surveys received. Ninety-six percent of respondents felt the calls were valuable to the conference's relationship with the committee. Overall feedback was positive about the conference monitoring program as well. Conferences were comfortable sharing injured/unavailable info with the committee, but did not feel the same question was appropriate for the RACs to weigh in on as opposing coaches were on those calls.
 - b. Diane Turnham led the committee through 2019-2020 conference monitoring assignments.
 - c. The committee voted and approved the Automatic Qualification conferences for the 2019-2020 season (see Action Item 2-b).
 10. **Selection of committee chair.** The committee voted Nina King as vice chair for the 2019-2020 year and incoming chair for the 2020-2021 year.
 11. **Division I Women's Basketball Oversight Committee update.** Diane Turnham updated the committee that the vice chair of the women's basketball committee will attend the WBOC meetings in a liaison role to connect the two committees. She also reviewed discussions around the coaches credentialing program, a revised recruiting calendar and the work of the college basketball reform subcommittees, which include recruiting,

diversity/retention/professional development in coaching and professional athletics opportunities.

12. **2019-20 Subcommittee assignments.** Ms. Turnham reviewed committee representation on subcommittees for the coming year. Rhonda Bennett has been asked to remain on the team selection subcommittee as an ex-officio member to provide consistency in discussion regarding the transition from RPI to NET.
13. **Annual ESPN update.** Alexa Dettlebach, Cheryl DiCarlo, Pat Lowry, Fatima Martinez, Alystia Moore, Carol Stiff and Pallav Tamaskar joined the meeting on behalf of ESPN. The ESPN staff recapped viewership, ratings and programming from 2019, as well as gave a preview of the 2019-2020 season. ESPN supports the two top 16 reveals and feels they are positioned well within the regular season television lineup.

For the 2020 championship, ESPN is reviewing moving away from the regionalized model and going to 48 full-national windows using all ESPN platforms. By comparison, the 2019 championship was provided six full-national windows. Similar to the model for men's basketball with Turner/CBS, fans could watch any of the four games simultaneously and have full control over which game they want to watch by changing to an ESPN owned network channel, rather than being restricted to what the network is showing on the local feed. ESPN gave the group a preview of what programming could potentially look like with the new model based on the 2019 championship, should this come to fruition. The priority would be to have all games on linear networks, but a last resort, depending on time zones, could be to have games on ESPN3, their digital platform. One complication from using this model could be start times later than 9 p.m. local time, possibly as late as 10 p.m. The committee noted the later start times have an impact on the team experience due to sports medicine treatment, media obligations, meals and transportation time postgame. The later game times present challenges with attendance for the women's basketball demographic, which could also impact viewership for a similar demographic. Overall discussions were very positive about the proposal. The committee felt it was an incredibly positive step for the championship, despite the logistical concerns. The committee was supportive of the new model if there could be assurance from ESPN that all games would be available on linear networks. **ESPN is still discussing probability of this idea and will announce the ability to provide this new broadcast plan closer to the tournament if applicable.**

The ESPN staff provided feedback on the proposed new regional format the committee has been considering. Both programming and production from prefer the four-event day model. To make the two-site format work, the Friday/Sunday site would have to be an Eastern time zone site, while the Saturday/Monday site would be Central or Pacific. Teams from the Central/Pacific site would be on a short turnaround to get to the Women's Final Four city on Tuesday. Overall, the potential change to a two-site regional format was supported by the broadcast partner.

The ESPN staff gave the committee a brief overview of what occurred leading to the accidental breach of the 2019 championship bracket prior to public release. Ms. Lowry summarized internal reviews, new protocols and rehearsals put in place moving forward to ensure the integrity of the bracket and prevent further issues.

Ms. Lowry also gave a preview of production for the women's basketball season and the championship, including talent shifts and a continued ask for access to mic'ing coaches. The committee supported forwarding a recommendation to the WBOC and to engage the WBCA for feedback on mic'ing coaches.

14. **Women's Basketball Coaches Association update.** Tricia Cullop and Danielle Donehew shared a review of initiatives the board is working on, as well as successes from the 2019 convention, which set a new attendance record for the association.

A recent survey of coaches via the WBCA regarding the potential change to the regional format was generally supportive of a two-site model or remaining the same, though Ms. Cullop and Ms. Donehew acknowledged disappointment that the response rate to the survey was low. As the survey confirmed, Ms. Cullop highlighted the importance of playing in front of large crowds during the tournament, which could be a potential benefit of moving to a two-site format, and the broadcast time of tournament games for national visibility to fans, boosters and recruits. Other important considerations included not putting opposing teams in the same hotel and ensuring full-service properties are available so that the teams do not need to leave the hotel for meals. Of less importance was accessibility to the court and practice time. Ms. Donehew emphasized the need for communicating the impact of changes (two teams at a hotel, reduced court time, etc.) ahead of time to help manage expectations for the tournament experience.

The group also garnered feedback from WBCA regarding the NCAA's coach credentialing pilot program and the future use of NET for women's basketball.

15. **Review and future planning of National Officiating Program.** Lynne Andrew and Penny Davis presented reports from the 2019 championship. Ms. Davis reviewed the status of the officiating program and preparations for the fall. The committee discussed with Ms. Davis the possibility of centralized replay and how that could influence future contracts with DVSPORT. The committee will forward a recommendation to the WBOC competition committee to add the consideration and impact of a centralized replay for their consideration.
16. **Officiating Subcommittee update.** Leslie Claybrook provided a report from the officiating subcommittee. The group discussed eliminating the indication of a second-round assignment until after the first-round games conclude, but there would be budget impact relative to officiating travel when the committee already has flexibility to make changes to second-round assignments if needed. The subcommittee brought the following proposals to the full committee:

- a. Officiating index. The subcommittee proposed the numeric value associated with the criteria for championship official selection be removed to allow newer officials the opportunity to access the championship. The list of criteria for selecting officials will remain the same. The committee voted and approved the removal of the numeric officiating index.
 - b. Increase in championship officiating fees. The subcommittee recommended increasing championship game officials fees based on comparisons to NCAA men's basketball tournament fees. The recommendation is to increase fees over a 3-year period to be in line with men's basketball championship fees for on-court officials by 2023, which will be submitted to the women's basketball oversight committee for final review (see Action Item 2-c).
17. **Playing Rules update**. Rachel Seewald joined the meeting to report on the status of playing rules changes and approval by Playing Rules Oversight Panel (PROP). PROP reviewed the rules change proposals and feedback from membership; rules changes from both the men's and women's basketball playing rules oversight committees were approved without additional edits.
18. **Review of 2019 NCAA Division I Women's Basketball Championship attendance, finances and travel**. Mr. Nixon presented the championship attendance numbers, including a 22,000 increase in overall event attendance from 2018. Ms. Cleaver presented the finances, travel costs and travel debrief from the 2019 championship.
- Note: The committee unanimously approved via email the \$200,000 honorarium to University of South Florida for hosting the 2019 Women's Final Four.*
19. **First and Second Round hosting requirements**. Ms. Cleaver provided a review of the current hosting policy and a recap of South Carolina's hosting exception for the 2019 championship. The committee reviewed the reasons they granted the approval to their request in February, including that the facility was already booked for another NCAA championship event, noting that the men's basketball championship made an effort to be in South Carolina after the confederate flag restriction was removed for hosting NCAA events. Ultimately, attendance at the Charlotte site was low and the expense of hosting was high. The committee discussed asking for more detail to consider a future exception, including average regular season attendance, projected attendance at the new site, marketing plan for ensuring fans support the move, etc. The committee decided the current policy allows enough flexibility to consider future exception requests.
20. **Brand affinity update (communications and social media)**. Mr. Nixon provided a recap of coverage from the 2019 championship. At the 2019 Women's Final four, 716 media credentials were distributed, second only to 773 at the 2018 Women's Final Four in Columbus. The championship has a lot of momentum from the past three tournaments that continued to feed

the buzz around women's basketball. The committee reviewed initiatives by the NCAA digital and social media team, and coverage by media entities that have not covered the championship in the last few years.

21. **2019 Championship review.** Amy Reis provided a recap of external operations of the 2019 championship including Read to the Final Four, NCAA Next Generation, Bounce, Super Saturday Concert, Dream Court, branding and corporate sponsorship.
22. **Games Management Subcommittee update.** Ms. Turnham provided a report from the games management subcommittee. The group discussed the live mascot policy, which is a championship-wide policy, the team credential system and regional awards ceremony procedures, but did not recommend any changes. The subcommittee reviewed the report on alcohol sales from regional rounds, with the report from Women's Final Four still forthcoming, and recommended not pursuing a share of alcohol sales revenue at this time. The subcommittee brought the following recommendations to the full committee:
 - a. The subcommittee proposed adding requirements that individuals in the ball kid role must have regular-season experience working in the same capacity around the court. The subcommittee added that there must be adult supervisor on each end of the playing floor to advise when to access the court.
 - b. The subcommittee proposed changing the order of postgame press conference appearances from losing team going first to winning team going first. The subcommittee cited issues they have encountered during the championship such as winning teams getting out of the building late after media and sports medicine treatments, getting winning coaches through press obligations so they can scout the second game. Additionally, Mr. Nixon has received feedback that media prefers the winning team go first to help meet story deadlines. The subcommittee would allow two exceptions, following the regional championship and national championship, when there is an awards ceremony. In this circumstance, the losing team would go first while the winning team proceeds through the awards ceremony and cutting of the nets on court.
 - c. The subcommittee recommended the following schedule adjustments:
 - 1) On game days at preliminary rounds, team will be provided two time slots per game for shootaround; the higher seeded team picks their time slot and the lower seeded team will be assigned the remaining time slot for that game. Shootaround times will need to be selected before their team's practice time ends the day prior to game day. No changes were made to non-game day schedules.
 - 2) At preliminary rounds, allow hosts the flexibility to open doors at 90 minutes prior to tip if doing so follows the facility's normal operation procedures during

the regular season. The court is already available to teams in first game at 90 minutes, so other activities will not be taking place in the bowl.

- 3) At Women's Final Four, reduce Saturday practice times to 90 minutes and move autograph sessions earlier, allowing more downtime in the evening before the national championship game.

The committee voted and approved the subcommittee's recommendations as outlined.

23. **New Orleans Local Organizing Committee (NOLOC) planning and progress update of the 2020 Women's Final Four.** Jeff Rossi, Jay Cicero and Kim Boyle reviewed the timeline of actions taken thus far regarding the overlap of French Quarter Festival with Women's Final Four Weekend. Based on recent discussions with the various city council members, the French Quarter Festival staff and the mayor's office, the NOLOC feels confident the French Quarter Festival will move their dates to avoid the overlap. Ms. Holzman shared expectations that the issue is formally wrapped up by the next NCAA site visit on August 13.
24. **Future meeting and teleconference schedule.** Ms. Cleaver reviewed the list of future meetings and teleconferences.
25. **Adjournment.** Ms. Bennett adjourned the meeting at 2:33 p.m.

Committee Chair: Rhonda Bennett, University of Nevada, Reno; Mountain West Conference
Staff Liaison(s): Lynn Holzman, Championships and Alliances
Meredith Cleaver, Championships and Alliances

NCAA Division I Women's Basketball Committee July 15-17, 2019, Meeting	
Attendees:	
Ceal Barry, University of Colorado, Boulder; Pac-12 Conference.	
Rhonda Bennett, University of Nevada, Reno; Mountain West Conference.	
Ken Bothof, University of Northern Kentucky, Horizon League.	
DeJuena Chizer, University of Houston; American Athletic Conference.	
Leslie Claybrook, Southeastern Conference.	
Nina King, Duke University; Atlantic Coast Conference.	
Teresa Phillips, Tennessee State University; Ohio Valley Conference.	
Debbie Richardson, Atlantic 10 Conference.	
Tamica Smith Jones, University of California, Riverside; Big West Conference.	
Diane Turnham, Middle Tennessee State University; Conference USA.	
Absentees:	

None.
Guests in Attendance:
Kim Boyle, New Orleans Local Organizing Committee. (via videoconference)
Jay Cicero, New Orleans Local Organizing Committee. (via videoconference)
Tricia Cullop, Women's Basketball Coaches Association.
Penny Davis, National Coordinator of Officiating.
Cheryl DiCarlo, ESPN.
Danielle Donehew, Women's Basketball Coaches Association.
Beth Goetz, Ball State University; Mid-American Conference.
Pat Lowry, ESPN.
Fatima Martinez, ESPN.
Alystia Moore, ESPN.
Jeff Rossi, New Orleans Local Organizing Committee. (via videoconference)
Jill Shields, Kansas State University; Big 12 Conference.
Carol Stiff, ESPN.
Pallav Tamaskar, ESPN.
NCAA Staff Support in Attendance:
Meredith Cleaver, Lynn Holzman.
Other NCAA Staff Members in Attendance:
Lynne Andrew, Andrea Gaither, Rachel Kay, Julie Kimmons, Tina Krah, Kelsi Mahoney, Daress McClung, Rick Nixon, Rachel Seewald.