

The Division II Football Committee implemented new bracketing initiatives beginning with the 2019 championship with the intention of reducing flights in the first two rounds of the championship. The committee has the ability to adjust a qualified team's placement in the championship bracket. This revised bracketing model has been approved through all levels of the NCAA governance structure and will continue for the 2026 NCAA Division II Football Championship.

Please note that the team selection process has not changed this year. The committee will still select the top eight teams in each super region. Once the bracket is complete and released there will be no changes until the four teams are seeded going into the semifinal round.

The committee will bracket the football championship according to the following principles:

1. The teams awarded the number one seed in each of four super regions shall be placed in the appropriate positions in the bracket in their selected super region (in each super region bracket, seed number 1 and seed number 4 in the upper half with two unseeded teams; and seed number 2 and seed number 3 in the lower half with two unseeded teams).

2. Teams that are selected in the #5, #6, #7, and #8 spots in each super region will be considered 'unseeded' and can be paired with any #1, #2, #3, or #4 seeded team in the first round. Unseeded teams may be placed in any super region bracket if doing so reduces the number of flights in the first/second round.

3. Teams that reach the field via automatic qualification (AQ) and are not ranked in the top eight of the final ranking on the day of selections will be paired with a #1 seed in the opening round in their home super region (*unless preliminary round flights can be reduced by being paired with a #1 seed in an alternate super region*). In the event that multiple teams earn berths in the field via automatic qualification and are not in the top eight in the final rankings on the day of selections, the following principles will be applied. If multiple AQs are ranked outside the top eight, the lowest-ranked AQ in the region will be paired with the #1 seed first. Subsequent AQs outside the top eight may be placed based on their rank and the integrity of the bracket.

4. All 32 teams will play first-round games and there will not be any byes. Seeds #1, #2, #3 and #4 in each super region will be paired with any unseeded team using the pairing priorities listed below.

Teams will be placed on the bracket using the following priorities with the consideration that the NCAA Division II mileage threshold for mandatory team travel via ground is 600 miles.

Priorities for Bracket Placement of Unseeded Teams:

a. Priority 1: Unseeded teams will be placed into the bracket in order to maximize reduction of first-round flights.

b. Priority 2: Unseeded teams will be placed into the bracket in a fashion that will reduce the likelihood of second round flights.

c. Priority 3: Repeating regular season match-ups in the first round of the championship should be avoided, provided that doing so does not increase the number of flights (per priorities 1 and 2).

d. Priority 4: Teams shall be paired accordingly based on what their seed would have been prior to being listed as 'unseeded'.

Example of Bracketing Principles

Previous Model

	miles between schools	travel
No. 2 seed hosts team A.....	880.....	flight
No. 3 seed hosts team B.....	331.....	drive
No. 4 seed hosts team C.....	617.....	flight

Enacting Current Bracket Principles

No. 2 seed hosts team B.....	450.....	drive
No. 3 seed hosts team C.....	460.....	drive
No. 4 seed hosts team A.....	550.....	drive