



**REPORT OF THE
NCAA DIVISION II FOOTBALL COMMITTEE
FEB. 11-12, 2026, ANNUAL MEETING**

ACTION ITEMS.

- None.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS.

1. **2025 annual meeting report.** The committee reviewed and approved the 2025 annual meeting report as submitted.
2. **2025-26 Division II Championships Committee actions.** The committee reviewed action and informational items applicable to Division II football since the committee's 2025 annual meeting.
3. **2026 American Football Coaches Association (AFCA) Convention.** Committee members and NCAA staff who were at the convention reviewed issues from the Division II football coaches who attended.
4. **NCAA Power Index (NPI).** The committee discussed the NPI with Tim Danehy in an attempt to determine the football dial-setting recommendations. The committee also scheduled subsequent videoconferences that will take place after the annual meeting to continue these discussions with Mr. Danehy. In addition, once the ultimate NPI dials are recommended by the Division II Football Committee and approved by the Division II Championships Committee, there will be a webinar to educate the membership about the NPI football dials in April 2026. This is tentatively planned for April 14, 2026.
5. **Football rules.** NCAA National Coordinator of Football Officials and Football Secretary-Rules Editor Steve Shaw joined the meeting and updated the committee on 2026 Division II football rules planning. Mr. Shaw noted that there is now a Division I Football Rules Committee and a separate and combined Divisions II and III Football Rules Committee. The Divisions II and III Playing Rules Oversight Panel (PROP) will serve as the approving body. The stated goal is to continue aligning the NCAA rules across divisions as much as possible and not have subdivided playing rules. Mr. Shaw also reviewed the 2025 rules changes and applicable data and discussed the preliminary rules topics that will be reviewed in advance of the 2026 season.

Ty Halpin of the NCAA staff also discussed the status of coach-to-player helmet communication and asked the committee to provide written feedback on this topic in advance of the upcoming Divisions II and III Football Rules Committee meeting. This committee will meet in late February 2026. The committee prepared its feedback to share with Mr. Halpin and Mr. Shaw. The committee also plans to follow up and provide feedback on this topic with the Division II members of the Divisions II and III Playing Rules Oversight Panel.

6. **Officiating.**

- a. **Update from Matt Young.** The committee received an update from Division II Director of Football Officials Matt Young on initiatives to increase the level of officiating across Division II. The committee supported Mr. Young providing feedback to each conference following the championship with the elements of a successful officiating program. After Mr. Young's report, the committee thanked him for his outstanding service in his initial year in this role.
 - b. **Assignment history.** The committee reviewed the officiating assignment history for the championship dating back to the 1999 season. The committee continued to agree that all conferences sponsoring the sport should ideally be assigned at least one playoff game in either the first and/or second round of the championship.
 - c. **Instant replay.** The committee noted that the first year of requiring championship hosts to have in place sideline instant replay for the first round, second round and quarterfinals of the 2025 NCAA Division II Football Championship went well. In addition, the committee also noted its desire to continue providing an instant replay booth official for both semifinals and the championship game. The committee supports the current provider of instant replay services being retained for both semifinals and the championship game.
 - d. **Video evaluators.** Mr. Young mentioned that the use of a video evaluator to evaluate each game during the 2025 championship was invaluable and will be continued in future years.
 - e. **Film/videotape exchange policy.** The committee noted that the current film/videotape exchange policy during the championship should continue for the 2026 championship.
7. **Selection criteria.** The committee discussed the current criteria used for rankings and selections and noted that for the 2026 NCAA Division II Football Championship, the NPI will be used for selection purposes. Nullification will also continue to be applied when applicable.
8. **Review of the 2025 polls process.**
 - a. **Weekly rankings.** The committee had no issues with the weekly rankings. The committee noted that the NPI rankings will be publicized during the 2026 season.
 - b. **National committee calls.** The committee noted that there is no need to schedule an additional call on Saturday night following the conclusion of the first round and second round to solely determine the hosts for the respective second-round and quarterfinal games. The committee will discuss the potential hosting scenarios for these two rounds on the respective preceding Sunday night committee calls.
 - c. **Online score reporting.** The committee reported no issues with the online score reporting system. The committee noted that the NPI will be applicable for the 2026 season.

- d. **Bracketing principles and priorities.** The committee reviewed the bracketing principles and priorities in place and noted that no changes are needed for the 2026 championship.

9. Review of the 2025 championship.

- a. **Championship recap and survey results from various groups.** The committee reviewed the championship recap prepared by NCAA staff and was informed that the survey evaluations from both the championship and preliminary rounds will not be available until March.
- b. **Media feedback and credentials for the championship game.** The committee will plan to continue with the virtual pre-championship press conference in advance of arrival at the championship site with the head coaches of both teams. The virtual press conference format for the 2025 championship game continued to attract more media participation than the in-person press conference at the championship site in previous years before moving to this current virtual format. The committee was pleased that the statistics were able to be displayed correctly on the ribbon board inside McKinney ISD Stadium. This had been an ongoing problem in previous years. Finally, there were no issues with the number of credentials issued for all rounds of the 2025 NCAA Division II Football Championship. The only changes to credentialing for the 2026 championship would be to provide medical credentials for the local organizing committee that has sideline access and also provide a limited number of postgame wristbands for field access for both teams participating in the championship game.
- c. **Television and broadcasting discussion.** The committee reviewed the television ratings from the NCAA broadcast staff and met with ESPN representatives. The ratings for the championship game were up 168 percent compared to the 2024 championship game (total of 323,000 viewers in 2025). This was also the most watched championship game since 2017. In addition, ESPN representatives were pleased with all preliminary rounds of the championship being aired on ESPN+ and that it averaged 10,953 unique viewers of the 30 total games on this platform. Finally, ESPN representatives asked to consider if the postgame awards presentation stage size could be expanded in the future to allow more room for the sideline reporter and the Division II Football Committee chair to present the championship trophy and conduct postgame interviews. If it can't be expanded, then they would like the committee to consider limiting the number of people on the stage. In addition, the ESPN representatives asked if the committee could also consider the seeding to list on the broadcast of the championship game. The Division II Football Committee also informed ESPN that they would desire to have the 2026 championship game on ABC, ESPN, or ESPN2 in a similar early afternoon kickoff time as the 2025 championship game. The committee also noted its willingness to begin the championship game even earlier in the day at either noon or 1 p.m. Eastern time. ESPN representatives envision the time and network for the championship game will remain the same in 2026.

- d. **Hotels.** The committee believes the two team hotels used this year were fine. There should continue to be an increased security presence at both team hotels after the championship game to deal with larger crowds at whichever hotel is hosting the winner.

As for the preliminary rounds, the committee did not express any issues of concern.

- e. **Practice facilities.** The committee believes the practice facilities provided to both teams were fine.
- f. **Security.** The committee noted that McKinney ISD improved on-field security for the 2025 championship game. Based on feedback from McKinney ISD, the committee supports their plan to not allow any fans on the field postgame in 2026. This policy needs to be communicated to the participating teams on the call following the quarterfinals. The committee also supported providing 60 wristbands to each team to provide postgame field access to the family members of coaches and administrators of both participating teams. The committee suggested that the access point to the playing field for those with a wristband would be at the aisle closest to the McKinney ISD Stadium Community Event Center on both sides of the stadium. The fans with wristbands of the losing team would be restricted to the vomitory outside their team locker room. In addition, the committee asked NCAA staff to work with the McKinney ISD representatives to determine if a countdown clock should be implemented once the game ends until the postgame awards programming begins. ESPN representatives suggested the shorter amount of time the better, and timing of seven to 10 minutes on a countdown clock was suggested. This is all dependent on the time it takes to install the stage after the championship game. The committee then further suggested possibly implementing a countdown clock after the awards ceremony to delineate when the field needs to be cleared of all fans.
- g. **Championship week schedule and itinerary.** The committee thought the schedule for the week worked well and no changes are needed.
- h. **Thursday night championship celebration and format.** The committee was pleased again with the Thursday night celebration at Main Event. The committee agreed that both teams should continue being hosted separately at this event in the future. The committee mentioned that it was a good change to present the NCAA Elite Scholar-Athlete Award at the beginning of the team's attendance at this event as opposed to the end.
- i. **Community engagement at local elementary schools.** The committee thought that the community engagement at the local elementary schools went well and no changes are needed.
- j. **Starting times.** The committee believes that a 1 p.m. local time start for the first three rounds of the playoffs works well, with the possibility for a one-hour variance if approved

by the committee. The ESPN representatives and the committee also noted that the semifinals starting times of noon Eastern time and 3:30 p.m. Eastern time should remain the same in the future.

- k. Seeding of semifinalists.** The committee noted it will wait until the Division II Championships Committee provides guidance on whether the NPI will only be published until the end of the regular season or if it will continue being updated throughout the postseason. This feedback will allow the committee to determine whether reseeding the semifinalists should be based on their NPI at the end of the regular season or on their NPI after the quarterfinals. If the latter, the committee believes the NPI should not be published again after the end of the regular season until the first three rounds of the championship are concluded.
 - l. Drug testing.** The committee noted no issues with the drug testing that took place in conjunction with one of the preliminary rounds of the 2025 NCAA Division II Football Championship.
 - m. In-game tablets and use at the championship game via SkyCoach.** The committee noted that the NCAA should continue working with SkyCoach to provide the setup and on-site support for the in-game tablets for the 2026 championship game.
 - n. Review of various manuals for other changes that should be implemented.** The committee did not suggest any edits to the various manuals and PowerPoints. The committee did suggest adding an agenda item to the meeting involving the quarterfinal participants to inform them about the postgame field access policy at the championship game. The committee also suggested adding an agenda item to the committee calls on Sunday night following selections and the first-round games about determining the hosting scenarios and which institution would host the second-round and quarterfinal games (if they submitted an acceptable bid by the stated deadline). This would allow the championship hosts for the second-round and quarterfinals to be known on Saturday following the previous round's game as opposed to waiting until the Sunday night committee call to finalize the championship hosts for these two rounds.
 - o. Branding/signage.** The committee noted that NCAA staff may want to consider adding an NCAA branded wrap or sticker on the existing goal post padding for the championship game.
- 10. Regional alignment/sport sponsorship.** The committee reviewed the anticipated changes for the 2026 season in each of the four super regions related to the institutions in each respective conference.

- 11. Automatic qualification.** The committee reviewed the conferences eligible for automatic qualification for the 2026 championship and noted that a recommendation would be submitted for the Championships Committee's June meeting.

 - Automatic Qualification Waiver Request. The committee provided an advisory opinion regarding an automatic qualification waiver that the Division II Championships Committee will consider during its February 19-20 meeting.
- 12. Legislative issues.** NCAA staff updated the committee on several legislative matters that were addressed relevant to Division II football at the 2026 NCAA Convention, as well as other issues that will be reviewed in the future. The annual deadline for Division II legislative proposals to be submitted by the membership is July 15. The committee noted that coaches at the 2026 AFCA convention expressed concern with the transfer portal, believing that the notification-of-transfer window should be aligned with the Division I transfer portal as part of any future legislative proposal. The committee noted that it would be ideal if any change could be viewed as noncontroversial legislation by the Division II Legislative Committee so that any transfer portal windows could be implemented expeditiously.
- 13. Division II governance updates.** Members of the NCAA governance staff joined the meeting and discussed topics of interest to the Division II Football Committee, which included the 2025-26 Division II priorities as well as Division II's 2026-32 Operating Plan.
- 14. Review of national and regional advisory committees.** The committee noted that regional advisory committees would no longer be applicable for the 2026 season based on the implementation of the NPI. The committee also reviewed the accuracy of the national committee roster, and noted the only change needed was to update John Wilson, Jr.'s title based on his recent promotion.
- 15. Annual meeting dates.** The committee will meet Feb. 8-9, 2027, in Indianapolis. The committee will arrive Feb. 7, and then begin meeting Feb. 8. The committee's celebratory dinner will take place Feb. 8 at 6 p.m. Eastern time. The committee will continue meeting Feb. 9 and adjourn by noon Eastern time.
- 16. Committee chair.** The committee elected David Sharp, director of athletics at Ouachita Baptist University, to serve as the chair for 2026-27. The committee also thanked Brett Gilliland, director of athletics at the University of West Alabama, for serving as the chair for 2025-26. Mr. Gilliland did an admirable job as the committee chair.
- 17. Strategic plan.** The committee reviewed the NCAA Division II Football Committee strategic plan and noted that no changes are needed.
- 18. Division II Football Committee – 2026-27 timeline/calendar.** The committee reviewed the timeline for the 2026-27 academic year and adjusted meeting times as necessary.

19. Division II Football Coaches Connection. The committee reviewed both the charge of the coaches connection program and the existing roster of coaches representing each conference sponsoring Division II football. Any head football coach on the national committee who is not part of the coaches connection roster has been allowed to serve as an ex-officio member.

20. Division II Championships Committee discussion topics. Members of the NCAA championships and alliances staff who serve as liaisons to the Division II Championships Committee updated the committee on the triennial budget process for 2027-30; NPI updates and planning for the 2026 football season; and an overview of next steps related to the regionalization review.

21. Outgoing committee members. NCAA staff thanked all committee members for their service during the 2025-26 year. The terms of Jas Bains of Western Colorado, Brett Gilliland of West Alabama, and Meghan Mulcahy of Northeastern State are scheduled to expire Aug. 31, 2026.

Committee chair: Brett Gilliland, University of West Alabama, Gulf South Conference

*Staff Liaisons: Randy L. Buhr, Championships and Alliances
 Jay Jay Rackley, Championships and Alliances*

NCAA Division II Football Committee Feb. 11-12, 2026, Meeting	
Attendees:	
Jas Bains, Western Colorado University.	
Brett Gilliland, University of West Alabama.	
Jim Givens, University of Findlay.	
Aaron James, Tuskegee University.	
Andy McKenzie, Assumption University.	
Meghan Mulcahy, Northeastern State University.	
David Sharp, Ouachita Baptist University.	
John Wilson, Jr., Virginia State University.	
Absentees:	
None.	
Guests in Attendance:	
Khari S. Climes, ESPN.	
Tim Danehy, NCAA Power Index (NPI).	
Kurt A. Dargis, ESPN.	

Michael J. Feinberg, ESPN.
John Kolano, ESPN.
Shawn Murphy, ESPN.
Steve Shaw, National Coordinator of Football Officials and Football Secretary-Rules Editor.
Matt Young, Division II Director of Football Officials.
NCAA Staff Liaison in Attendance:
Randy L. Buhr, Championships and Alliances.
Jay Jay Rackley, Championships and Alliances.
Other NCAA Staff Members in Attendance:
Jeremy Christoffels, Governance and Member Services.
Jess Gaumer, Championships and Alliances.
Ty Halpin, Championships and Alliances.
Maritza Jones, Division II Governance.
Ryan Jones, Division II Governance.
Micaela Kapsalis, Championships and Alliances.
Karen Kirsch, Championships and Alliances.
Jarom McLiver, Championships and Alliances.
Katie Mucci, Division II Governance.
Phil Pierce, Championships and Alliances.
Courtney Wengryn, Division II Governance.