



**REPORT OF THE
NCAA DIVISION III WOMEN'S ICE HOCKEY COMMITTEE
APRIL 24, 2024, ANNUAL MEETING**

KEY ITEMS.

1. **Verbiage in past student-athlete experience proposal.** The committee requests to amend the already approved language proposal to allow for an extra flight in the preliminary round if two teams were to play each other for the third straight year in the championship. (See Action item 2-a.)
2. **Automatic qualification.** The committee requests approval for all eligible conferences to receive automatic qualification. (See Action Item 2-b.)
3. **Committee chair.** The committee reelected the chair for 2024-25. (See Informational Item 11.)

ACTION ITEMS.

1. Legislative items.

- None.

2. Nonlegislative items.

a. Bracketing.

- (1) Recommendation. The committee requests amending the language in the proposal approved in 2019-20 to read as follows: "To allow the Division III Men's and Women's Ice Hockey Committees to pair teams outside of the 500-mile travel radius (i.e., create a flight) when the bracketing principles would otherwise require two teams to face one another for a third consecutive year in the tournament. For additional clarification, if the teams competed in the quarterfinal round in the two prior years after one team advances out of the first round, but the standard bracketing principles would require those teams to be paired in the first round of the third year, this recommendation would apply. The committee also requests flexibility to avoid a potential quarterfinal rematch if there are not enough teams from one region to provide a different route if one of the teams involved in the first round would play into a quarterfinal round with the other team that has the bye."
- (2) Effective date. September 1, 2024.
- (3) Rationale. The same rationale used when this proposal was approved in 2019-20 would still apply with the additional protection of removing the round requirement and providing different pathways for teams in isolated geographical regions. While the committee is aware the Division III Championships Committee is looking at this policy

holistically, the Division III Women's Ice Hockey Committee believes this additional layer of protection could be needed as the seeding might not apply in the new overarching policy created by the Championships Committee.

For clarification purposes, the original rationale is provided below:

Due to the small size of the Division III Men's and Women's Ice Hockey Championship fields, existing bracketing principles can negatively affect institutions that are geographically isolated. Current policies require championship brackets to be developed based on geography with the goal to minimize flights. When current policies have been applied, the same two institutions have been paired in the quarterfinals of the Division III Women's Ice Hockey Championship for the past four seasons. (Note: the same circumstances have not traditionally occurred with the men's ice hockey championship, but the potential exists given the bracket size and location of sponsoring schools in the sport.)

Because one institution is geographically isolated and typically only has one other participating institution located within the 500-mile travel radius, the committee is often forced to develop the championship bracket around the matchup of these two institutions. Based on participant feedback, having the same two teams play each other in the quarterfinal round four years in a row has negatively impacted the student-athlete experience. Therefore, the Division III Men's and Women's Ice Hockey Committees are requesting an exception to the current bracketing principle when the same two teams have been paired together for two consecutive years.

This exception would allow the committees to use no more than one flight in the quarterfinal round to create a matchup of different opponents. And, while this exception would be applied narrowly to men's and women's ice hockey, the committees recognize that it could be helpful for new championships and those with fewer than 16 teams (e.g., men's volleyball). While the committee recognizes this policy will provide additional flexibility to these championships that is not provided to others, the committee hopes the Championships Committee acknowledges the uniqueness of ice hockey compared to other championships.

- (4) Estimated budget impact. There would be no additional budget impact as the budget was already approved during the 2019-20 recommendation and has not been used to date.
- (5) Student-athlete impact. The student-athlete impact would be tremendous. With the unique regional model of ice hockey, several student-athletes compete against the same teams in the postseason year after year, and potentially ever year they are playing collegiate sports. The committee is hoping to provide a new experience to these student-athletes and offer them a chance to reach the highest level of the sport in the fairest way possible.

b. Automatic qualification.

- (1) Recommendation. Approve the following eight conferences for automatic qualification

to the 2025 NCAA Division III Women's Ice Hockey Championship: Commonwealth Coast Conference, Middle Atlantic Conferences, Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference, New England Hockey Conference, New England Small College Athletic Conference, State University of New York Athletic Conference, United Collegiate Hockey Conference, and Women's Northern Collegiate Hockey Association.

(2) Effective date. September 1, 2024.

(3) Rationale. Each conference meets the requirements of NCAA Bylaw 31.3.3 and has completed the automatic-qualification declaration form (note that pool allocations may be adjusted based on 2024-25 sponsorship numbers).

Anticipated pool allocations: Pool A – 8, Pool C – 4

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS.

1. **2023 annual meeting report.** The committee approved the 2023 annual meeting report as submitted.
2. **Automatic qualification, pool breakdowns and regional alignment.** The committee reviewed the regional alignments by conference. Staff noted conference membership changes and will be confirmed once the 2024-25 sponsorship information is available. The committee is also aware of pending legislation that would change the access ratio across Division III championships and would result in a 12th team in the championship for 2025.
3. **Discussion with the national coordinator of officials and secretary-rules editor.** The committee met with Krissy Langley, the national coordinator of officials, and Jeff Fulton, secretary-rules editor, to discuss the postseason assignment process, goal judges in preliminary rounds, the addition of video review educational materials prior to the national semifinals, and to provide a general recap of the finals site officials.
 - a. **Officials selection process.** The committee reviewed the process used for selecting and approving officials for the 2024 championship and thought Ms. Langley did an outstanding job. Committee members appreciated Ms. Langley's work to ensure that the appropriate officials were assigned to all rounds of the championship. The committee commended Ms. Langley's work in year one of the role to work with the officials to ensure their availability during the postseason, and working with conference assignors to ensure the best possible officials were assigned to postseason via their recommendation and her review.
 - b. **Video review at the championship.** The committee discussed the continued confusion surrounding video replay at the championship since it is not a regular-season or preliminary-round function. The committee specifically noted the rule change from 2023 requiring only those goals that are challenged to be reviewed rather than all goals. The

committee discussed how that impacted Division III differently than Division I and was pleased with the informational handouts prepared by the officiating staff and used at the finals site. The committee continues to view the use of video replay essential at the final site, and tasked championship liaisons to ensure the replay provider is most prepared to provide the best available angles at the championship.

- c. **RQ+.** The committee commended the ice hockey officiating staff for the content created for the membership.
 - d. **Officials evaluations.** The committee agreed to continue the officials evaluations from coaches during the championship.
 - e. **Goal Judges.** The committee discussed the use of goal judges at preliminary rounds and the finals site. Goal judges are becoming less common in regular-season play, and it is proving difficult to find qualified individuals for postseason. The committee will revisit this topic during fall planning and decide whether to use these individuals for 2025 postseason at that time.
- 4. **2024 American Hockey Coaches Association report.** The committee reviewed the report staff will present to the Division III coaches during the AHCA convention in May. Committee Chair Wendy McManus is attending on behalf of the committee, and the committee and championship liaison will hold a follow-up zoom meeting with all coaches after the convention.
 - 5. **Selection of a predetermined finals site.** The committee was pleased with the progress made in the past year of creating minimum bid specifications that were used during the 2024 nonpredetermined bid cycle and additionally the overall NCAA bid cycle. The committee received approval to announce a 2025 host prior to the announcement of all other championship with the escalated timeline. The committee reviewed all bids submitted for 2025 and 2027 and ultimately recommended two sites for 2025 and 2027, pending additional information provided from national office staff in the overall bid process. The committee will submit a separate report for the 2025 site to continue on the advanced timeline to maximize planning timelines.
 - 6. **Championship date formula.** The committee was pleased that the championship date formula request was approved and urged national office staff to continue informing the membership of the change.
 - 7. **Bracket Integrity.** The committee noted the uniqueness of only two regions in ice hockey and the 500-mile bracketing policy. The committee desires more bracket flexibility and the addition of allowable flights to maintain bracket integrity when possible, particularly to protect the West region. The committee is aware that the Division III Championships Committee is reviewing an overall policy but still recommended an ice hockey-specific policy outlined in Action Item 2-a.
 - 8. **2024 championship review.**
 - a. **Site representative recruitment and training.** The committee discussed the recruitment of site representatives for the 2024 championship and agreed that despite having a great

pool of candidates it is challenging to lock in site reps on Sunday night for games the following Wednesday. The committee noted a need to improve recruitment strategies ahead of selection night to increase the candidate pool and ensure they are educated on the role and responsibilities. The committee is aware moving games to Saturdays will allow more time for site representatives to feel prepared.

- b. **Championship format.** The committee was pleased with the format of the 11-team bracket in its second year of implementation. The committee is aware that the bracket is increasing to 12 teams in 2025 and hopes to continue to see that number grow through sport sponsorship.
- c. **PairWise rankings.** The committee reviewed the selection criteria and met with Tim Danehy to review PairWise. The committee fully supports sticking with PairWise for the Division III Women's Ice Hockey Championship. The committee is also aware that the entire division is switching from the current selection criteria to NPI, a system that is similar to Pairwise with the same creator. The committee has met with Mr. Danehy several times to set the new NPI dials and will submit a separate report when those dials are finalized for the 2024-25 season.
- d. **Selection call.** The committee discussed the selection timeline for 2024. The committee was pleased with moving up the selection call to talk through the multiple bracket scenarios. The committee was pleased with the technology and number of potential hosts.
- e. **Selection show.** The committee asked NCAA staff to work with selection show content producers to ensure they are aware of bracketing principles and encourage outreach on pronunciation.
- f. **Preliminary rounds.** The committee reviewed preliminary-round feedback and was pleased with the results. The committee noted the diligent planning each host conducted to ensure an exemplary championship experience at preliminary rounds.
- g. **Dual-site hosts (men's and women's.)** The committee noted the uniqueness of sites hosting both men's and women's postseason games on the same weekend. The committee believes hosts have proven both can be held in the same day and will provide additional game schedule options for dual-site hosts to ensure there is maximum flexibility. The committee prefers to keep game times consistent at all sites at 3 p.m. Eastern/2 p.m. Central for all rounds outside of the finals.
- h. **Practice times.** The committee will continue offering teams 90 minutes of practice the day before competition and 60 minutes the day of competition.
- i. **Day of rest.** The committee was pleased with the second year of adding a day of rest to the finals site and anticipates that continuing to add value to the experience at future championships.
- j. **Signage.** The committee was pleased with the enhanced signage provided at the championship and thought it added to the championship experience. The committee was

pleased with the “ticket punched” sign, enlarged bracket, and lighting piece throughout the championship. The committee feels the signage can only be improved with a predetermined finals site host.

- k. **Hotels.** The committee was pleased with the team hotels for the finals. The committee noted the difficulty of not being able to secure a hotel in advance that meets all the needs of the participants. The committee feels this will be one of the major improvements of a predetermined finals site.
- l. **Broadcasting/streaming.** The committee was pleased with the broadcasting of the national championship weekend and was pleased that all preliminary-round hosts streamed the games.
- m. **Banquet.** The committee reviewed the banquet and supported continuing the event moving forward.
- n. **Community service.** The committee appreciated the community service project that the hosts put together and supported a similar idea moving forward.
- o. **All-tournament team.** The committee was pleased with the composition of the all-tournament team at the finals site and will continue with this approach in 2025.
- p. **Game times.** The committee will remain flexible on finals site game times but supported the times implemented in 2025.
- q. **Survey review.** The committee reviewed the survey results and discussed them throughout the various sections of the agenda.

9. 2025 championship.

- a. **2024 committee timeline.** The committee affirmed the timeline for 2023 worked well and will hope to use a similar timeline in 2024.
- b. **Community service.** The committee supports continuing a partnership with a local community service organization but is open to new ideas on how to best integrate the partnership into the flow of a busy championship weekend. The committee supported working with the host to provide a boxed lunch for teams to assist with the logistics.
- c. **Practice.** The committee confirmed the process for selecting practice times worked well for 2024 and will plan to use this method for 2025.

10. **Committee roster.** The committee noted the expiring term of one member. The committee is pleased with the current makeup of term expirations to help maintain an experienced base from year to year.

11. **Committee chair.** The committee re-elected Wendy McManus, director of athletics at SUNY Oswego, as the chair for 2024-25.

12. Division III update. Staff provided legislative updates from the NCAA Convention and recent Division III Management Council meetings.

13. Joint meeting with Division III Men's Ice Hockey Committee surrounding Bylaw 17.14.2.1. The committee met jointly with the men's ice hockey committee to review a proposal amending the bylaw. A separate report will be submitted. The committee will meet jointly again with the men's committee during their summer annual meeting.

14. Ice hockey manuals review. The committee reviewed the various manuals and instructed staff to make the appropriate updates.

15. 2025 annual meeting. The committee supported having the annual meeting on site in conjunction with the championship but will continue to decide on a yearly basis the best time and place for the annual meeting.

Committee Chair: Wendy McManus, SUNY Oswego, State University of New York Athletic Conference

Staff Liaison(s): Caleb Kolby, Championships and Alliances; Markell Staton, Championships and Alliances

NCAA Division III Women's Ice Hockey Committee April 24, 2024, Annual Meeting	
Attendees:	
Dave LaBaff, Wilkes University.	
Kelly Rider, Curry College	
Kim Sorensen, Marian University (WI).	
Michelle McAteer, Augsburg University.	
Wendy McManus, SUNY Oswego.	
Absentees:	
None.	
Guests in Attendance:	
Tim Danehy, PairWise/NPI.	
Jeff Fulton, NCAA Ice Hockey Secretary-Rules Editor.	
Krissy Langley, National Coordinator of Officials.	
NCAA Staff Liaison (or Staff Support if subcommittee) in Attendance:	
Caleb Kolby, Markell Staton.	
Other NCAA Staff Members in Attendance:	
Bill Regan, Becca Trovato, Jeff Myers and Laura Peterson-Mlynski.	