



REPORT OF THE
NCAA DIVISION III WOMEN'S ICE HOCKEY COMMITTEE
MARCH 18, 2023, ANNUAL MEETING

KEY ITEMS.

1. **Predetermined finals site.** The committee requests to move to a predetermined finals site starting with the 2025 championship and switch being a predetermined site and nonpredetermined site every other year. (See Action item 2-a.)
2. **Championship date formula.** The committee requests approval to change the championship date formula starting in the 2024-25 academic year and at the 2025 championship. (See Action Item 2-b.)
3. **Automatic qualification.** The committee requests approval for all eligible conferences to receive automatic qualification. (See Action Item 2-c.)
4. **Committee chair.** The committee elected a new chair for 2023-24. (See Informational Item 12.)

ACTION ITEMS.

1. **Legislative items.**

- None.

2. **Nonlegislative items.**

a. **Predetermined sites.**

- (1) Recommendation. Pilot a period beginning in 2025 and extending through the 2026-30 host bid cycle in which three championship finals (2025, 2027 and 2029) are conducted at predetermined sites, including at least one year in the East region and at least one year in the West region. The remaining three championship finals in the period (2026, 2028 and 2030) would be held at the campus of the highest seed as is currently done.
- (2) Effective date. September 1, 2023.
- (3) Rationale. The committee believes the time is right in the growth of the women's championship to mirror the Division III Men's Ice Hockey Championship format and switch between predetermined sites and nonpredetermined sites every other year. The committee feels that not having a predetermined site is potentially doing the student-athletes a disservice by not maximizing their experiencing at the national championship. The committee noted several details throughout the championship that could be improved upon with diligent planning, a site visit and multiple host calls.

Additional enhancements include securing a hotel months in advance that meets the needs of the championship, ensuring the banquet is well-planned at a space-appropriate venue, creating signage custom to the site to enhance the look and feel of the championship, ensuring that the championship hosts have the capability and technology to install cameras for video replay, ensuring that the in-ice art required for hosts to implement can be shipped and installed in a timely manner prior to the first practices, ensuring that the dozens of championship items arrive in a timely manner (thus reducing the risk of delays and time to fix shipping errors), and ensuring hosts can plan appropriately to staff a national championship event. With that being said, the committee noted the concern of several coaches within the women's ice hockey membership regarding a complete switch without having a trial experience to ensure it is the best decision for the student-athletes. While the committee is aware of the challenges of the nonpredetermined site, the committee is aware of the atmosphere being at a host site brings for the competing student-athletes. The pilot period being recommended will allow for the membership to see the championship experience with both setups and make the best decision for the student-athletes moving forward.

- (4) Estimated budget impact. An estimated \$22,000 for a championship year where the fourth team would be within driving distance to the final site. This includes a flat rate bus per diem of \$1500 for five days, and a per diem increase of \$50 per individual in the travel party (28) to \$115. In a year where the nonpredetermined host would be flying to a predetermined host site, there would be an additional cost of 56,000 for the for a flight and increased per diem. While there is an increase in the budget for these reasons, there will also be cost reductions with having a predetermined host. This includes savings in shipping expenses due to the fact of shipping heavy materials via ground shipping rather than overnight or two-day shipping. Additionally, expenses can be more controlled with proper budgeting and planning, rather than making quick decisions on financials based off potential hosts and each unique financial situation. Finally, contracted hotels for committee and officials will help secure affordable rates and budget savings. The estimated budget savings would be approximately \$10,000 for a net budget impact of \$6,600 in a year where the fourth team would be driving and \$46,000 in a year where the fourth team would be flying.
- (5) Student-athlete impact. The committee is confident that having experiences at predetermined final site and nonpredetermined final site will provide the best guidance for an informed decision for the student-athlete experience at this championship.

b. Championship date formula.

- (1) Recommendation. Change the championship date formula as indicated in the chart below to provide the optimal student-athlete experience, emphasize proper rest for student-athlete safety, and to mirror the Men's Ice Hockey Championship formula.

Current Date Formula	
First Rounds (3)	Wednesday prior to quarterfinals
Quarterfinals	One week prior to finals (Saturday)
Finals	Third full weekend in March (Friday-Saturday)

Proposed Date Formula	
First Rounds (3)	Saturday prior to quarterfinals
Quarterfinals	Saturday prior to finals (Saturday)
Finals	Fourth full weekend in March (Friday-Sunday in nonpredetermined site years; Thursday-Saturday in predetermined site years)

- (2) Effective date. September 1, 2024.
- (3) Rationale. The committee noted the difficulty in having three first-round games occurring mid-week and those winners advancing to the quarterfinals just two days later. The committee noted the need for proper rest and recovery after an ice hockey game, especially given the potential of overtime(s) during postseason play. The committee noted the bracket increases over the past several years and the addition of multiple first-round games. The committee also noted the difference between the men's and women's championship dates and desired to be equitable in rest and recovery provided during postseason play.
- (4) Estimated budget impact. None.
- (5) Student-athlete impact. The committee is confident that having additional rest days for the student-athletes will enhance their championship experience by providing a more competitive and spirited postseason competition.

c. Automatic qualification.

- (1) Recommendation. Approve the following seven conferences for automatic qualification to the 2024 NCAA Division III Women's Ice Hockey Championship: Commonwealth Coast Conference, Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference, New England Hockey Conference, New England Small College Athletic Conference, , Northeast Women's Hockey League, United Collegiate Hockey Conference, and Women's Northern Collegiate Hockey Association.
- (2) Effective date. September 1, 2023.
- (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 2022-23 sponsorship numbers).

Anticipated pool allocations: Pool A – 7, Pool B – 1, Pool C – 3.

- (4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS.

1. **2022 annual meeting report.** The committee approved the 2022 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 2023-24 sponsorship information is available.
3. **Discussion with the national coordinator of officials and secretary-rules editor.** The committee met with Tim DiFusco, the national coordinator of officials; Jeff Fulton, secretary-rules editor; and Ron Scales, on-site supervisor for the finals, to discuss the postseason assignment process, 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 2023 championship and thought it went well. Committee members appreciated Mr. DiFusco's work to ensure that the appropriate officials were assigned to all rounds of the championship.
 - b. **Video review at the championship.** The committee discussed the 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 for 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.
 - 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.
4. **2023 American Hockey Coaches Association report.** The committee reviewed the report staff will present to the Division III coaches during the AHCA convention in April.
5. **Review of moving to a predetermined finals site.** The committee discussed the advantages and disadvantages of moving to a predetermined finals site. The committee ultimately recommended moving to a predetermined final site starting with the 2025 championship (see Action Item 2-a.) The committee discussed a need to produce minimum bid specs that were available to the public for all years moving forward.
6. **Championship date formula.** The committee discussed the current championship date formula and why it differs from the men's date formula. The committee discussed the

concerns on player safety with the quick turnaround. The committee ultimately agreed to recommend changing the championship date formula with a delayed implementation beginning with the 2024 championship.

7. **Bracket flexibility.** The committee noted the uniqueness of only two regions in ice hockey and the 500-mile bracketing policy. The committee wishes for more bracket flexibility and the addition of allowable flights to maintain bracket integrity when possible, particularly to protect the West region.

8. **2023 championship review.**

- a. **Site representative recruitment and training.** The committee discussed the recruitment of site representatives for the 2023 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.
- b. **Championship format.** The committee was pleased with the format of the 11-team bracket in its first year of implementation. Members hope that sponsorship will continue to grow so that the bracket can be expanded further in the future.
- 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 also discussed with Mr. Danehy the difference between the RPI and the NPI and will continue considering whether to recommend using the NPI instead of the RPI as a selection criterion.
- d. **Selection call.** The committee discussed the selection timeline for 2023. 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. **Preliminary rounds.** The committee reviewed preliminary-round feedback and was pleased with the results. The committee noted the diligent planning put forward by each host to ensure a championship experience at preliminary rounds. The committee noted moving the quarterfinal participating team call on Monday back to Thursday morning if both teams are not confirmed in the quarterfinal matchup. The committee also noted the need to address off-ice warmup space for both the home and away teams in bids moving forward. The committee confirmed preliminary-round game times should remain the same in 2024.
- f. **Practice times.** The committee was pleased with the addition of practice time for the day prior to competition to 90 minutes.
- g. **Day of rest.** The committee was pleased to add a day of rest to the finals site and anticipates that continuing to add value to the experience at future championships. The committee noted the importance of the day of rest with the first semifinal going into two

overtimes on Friday.

- h. **Student-athletes in uniform.** The committee was pleased with allowing all traveling student-athletes within the bench number (30) to be in uniform during the championship but noted that since ice hockey has a playing rule that limits the actual number of student-athletes in the bench area, it was less impactful for this sport. Additionally, the committee was pleased to provide all student-athletes participating in the championship with a NCAA patch.
- i. **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.
- j. **Hotels.** The committee was pleased with the team hotel 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. While this hotel met the needs of the participants, the committee noted the need for hotels to be closer to the site if at all possible.
- k. **Broadcasting/streaming.** The committee was pleased with the broadcasting of the national championship and was pleased that all preliminary-round hosts streamed the games.
- l. **Banquet.** The committee reviewed the banquet and supported continuing the event moving forward. The committee noted the need for the banquet to be served in buffet style and will be implementing that requirement moving forward.
- m. **Community service.** The committee appreciated the community service project that the hosts put together and supported a similar idea moving forward.
- n. **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 2024.
- o. **Game times.** The committee will remain flexible on finals site game times but supported the times implemented in 2023.
- p. **Elimination of third-place game.** The committee supported the decision to eliminate the third-place game at the championship.
- q. **Survey review.** The committee reviewed the survey results and discussed them throughout the various sections of the agenda.

9. 2024 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. **Locker rooms.** The committee noted the need to emphasize with hosts during prep calls

and site visits that each team's locker room spaces must be as equitable as possible. The committee will review the 2024 host's locker room plan and ensure it meets the expectations of the championship to the best of their ability.

c. 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.

d. Practice. The committee confirmed the process for selecting practice times worked well for 2023 and will plan to use this method for 2024.

10. Budget cycle. The committee noted the upcoming Division III budget cycle with requests due in early 2024.

11. 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.

12. Committee chair. The committee confirmed that Wendy McManus, director of athletics at SUNY Oswego, will serve as the chair for 2023-24.

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

14. Joint meeting with Division III Men's Ice Hockey Committee. The committee met jointly with the men's ice hockey committee to review each championship and upcoming action items. The committees will plan to meet jointly again during the men's committee annual meeting.

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

16. 2024 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: Dave Walberg, University of Massachusetts-Boston, New England Hockey Conference

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

NCAA Division III Women's Ice Hockey Committee March 18, 2023, Annual Meeting	
Attendees:	
Dave LaBaff, Wilkes University.	
Wendy McManus, SUNY Oswego.	

Report of the NCAA Division III Ice Hockey Committee

Annual Meeting

March 18, 2023

Page 8

Michelle McAteer, Augsburg University.
Kim Sorensen, Marian University (WI).
Absentees:
None.
Guests in Attendance:
Tim Danehy, PairWise.
Jeff Fulton, NCAA Ice Hockey Secretary-Rules Editor.
Ron Scales, National Championship Supervisor of Officials.
Tom DiFusco, National Coordinator of Officials.
Katie Boldvich, NCAA Division III Men's Ice Hockey Committee.
Danielle Harris, NCAA Division III Men's Ice Hockey Committee.
Doug Schueller, NCAA Division III Men's Ice Hockey Committee.
Tyler Hynes, NCAA Division III Men's Ice Hockey Committee.
NCAA Staff Liaison (or Staff Support if subcommittee) in Attendance:
Caleb Kolby, Markell Staton.
Other NCAA Staff Members in Attendance:
Jeff Meyers, Brittany Higgins, Ashley Caldwell.