



REPORT OF THE
NCAA DIVISION III WOMEN'S ICE HOCKEY COMMITTEE
NOVEMBER 21, 2023, EMAIL

ACTION ITEMS.

- **None.**

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS.

- **Championship Date Formula Change.** The Division III Championships Committee asked the Division III Women's Ice Hockey Committee to provide additional information regarding the recommendation to alter the date formula and move the championship to the fourth weekend in March, starting with the 2025 Division III Women's Ice Hockey Championship. The Championships Committee acknowledged the women's ice hockey committee's original rationale; however, the Championships Committee recently determined that any proposed changes to championship date formulas must be thoroughly vetted before being considered and thus asked for additional feedback from coaches, directors of athletics and conference commissioners through survey questions the committee approved in advance.

Accordingly, the women's ice hockey committee distributed the survey separately to ADs, coaches, and the commissioners. The surveys were sent directly from the NCAA to directors of athletics and commissioners, and via the coaches association for coaches. The survey was built using Microsoft Forms so answers could be easily collected and analyzed.

(1) Committee Feedback. Following are the committee's responses to the additional questions posed by the Championships Committee that led to this proposal originally.

- a. **What are the pressure points initiating this proposed change?** The committee's focus for this change was to enhance student-athlete safety and to ensure equity across genders. Currently, the first round of Division III Women's Ice Hockey Championship is played on the Wednesday after selections. The quarterfinal round is played on the following Saturday. With most conference tournaments being played the weekend of selections, this is putting a large strain on student-athletes from selection weekend to those advancing to the quarterfinal. Additionally, with unlimited overtimes in postseason, there could be situations where teams are playing multiple overtimes on Wednesday night, traveling back to campus, and departing the following day for the quarterfinal matchup on the road. Additionally, the Division III Men's Ice Hockey Championship selects on the same weekend the women and has the championship formula that the women's ice hockey committee is proposing. The committee sees no reason not to make this change.
- b. **What problem does this change aim to alleviate?** The problem that this change aims to alleviate is summarized in the response above.
- c. **Have other potential models been considered?** The committee did not believe other potential date models needed to be considered.

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- d. **What hosting challenges might this cause?** This change could help alleviate some hosting challenges by spreading out the time of hosting duties. First-round hosts would have a week to prepare, and quarterfinal hosts, if known at selections, would now have two weeks to prepare. This additional time can be used to ensure a better student-athlete experience with diligent planning and communication to traveling teams. There could be issues with schools bidding to host a men's ice hockey preliminary round, but there is precedent that a school can host two preliminary rounds on the same day as men's and women's times do not overlap.
 - e. **Is there precedent for making this change?** The committee believes the Division III Men's Ice Hockey championship date formula serves as precedent for making this change, as they switched to this championship date formula format as their bracket expanded. The men's championship used the championship date formula that the women are requesting when their bracket was at 11 teams in 2014-15.
 - f. **What is the history of changes to this championship?** The championship expanded to a Wednesday first-round game when the bracket expanded from eight to nine teams, and now to 11 teams.
 - g. **How would this change impact the student-athlete experience?** This change should provide a positive student-athlete experience based on the survey results collected.
 - h. **What is the gender equity impact?** The gender equity impact is noted in the survey results. Should this not be approved, it would be concerning. As listed above, this proposal is to align the genders and ensure the championships remain equitable as both sports continue to grow.
- (2) Survey Responses and Membership Input. All responses were submitted anonymously, so the committee is unaware of who responded with which answers, and if it is coming from a coach, AD, or conference commissioner. The committee asked the seven required questions and allowed for open comments. The survey data are included in full (see the Attachment), but the following highlights support the committee's desire to push the proposal forward:
- a. More than 40 individuals responded. There are 74 schools that currently sponsor women's ice hockey, so the survey was well received. Of the 40 respondents, none thought this change would have a negative impact to the student-athlete experience. Additionally, 33 found this would be a positive change, with seven taking a neutral stance.
 - b. Of the 40 that responded, 19 stated this would result in less missed class time, as there would be no midweek first-round game, where currently six teams are playing. While there would be a week added to the tournament, removing a midweek game helps with missed class time. Seven respondents thought it would increase missed class time and seven thought there would be no change.

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- c. For potential campus impact change, responses varied based on the institution. Some thought the change from the first-round midweek game would provide better resources for their student-athletes, while some thought extending the season an additional week would cause more crossover for the spring sports with their athletics staffing. For additional events on campus, the main comments focused on the potential of also hosting a men's ice hockey preliminary round and spring sport crossover, which has been previously mentioned in the report.
 - d. For the budget impact, most comments focused on keeping their on-campus rink, or rented space, available and ready for an additional week. There did not seem to be concerns about the need for this, but the reality is that it would impact the budget. There were no championship budget impacts noted as far as impacts on the institution.
 - e. The gender equity response was overwhelmingly positive, with 39 of 40 respondents supporting how this will align the women's championship with the men's championship.

After discussing this additional outreach and research at length, the Division III Women's Ice Hockey Committee continues to strongly believe the championship date change proposal is truly the best path for the membership and the championship going forward. The committee feels that because the data overwhelmingly support the change, it is important to move forward with the proposal.

Committee Chair: Wendy McManus, State University of New York at Oswego
Staff Liaison: Caleb Kolby, Championships and Alliances

Division III Women's Ice Hockey Committee November 21, 2023, Email	
Attendees:	
Kelly Rider, Curry College.	
Dave LaBaff, Wilkes University.	
Kim Sorensen, Marian University (Wisconsin).	
Michelle McAteer, Augsburg University.	
Absentees:	
None.	
Guests in Attendance:	
None.	
NCAA Staff Support in Attendance:	
Caleb Kolby, Championships and Alliances.	
Other NCAA Staff Members in Attendance:	
None.	