



**REPORT OF THE
NCAA WOMEN'S ICE HOCKEY COMMITTEE
JUNE 4-5, 2019, MEETING**

Action Item: The NCAA Division I Competition Oversight Committee will consider a recommendation for four conferences to receive automatic qualification for the 2020 National Collegiate Women's Ice Hockey Championship.

ACTION ITEMS.

1. Legislative items.

- None.

2. Nonlegislative items.

- **Automatic qualification.**
 - a. Recommendation. That the following four conferences receive automatic qualification for the 2020 National Collegiate Women's Ice Hockey Championship: College Hockey America, East Coast Athletic Conference Hockey, Hockey East Association and Western Collegiate Hockey Association.
 - b. Effective date. September 1, 2019.
 - c. Rationale. All eligible conferences are being recommended.
 - d. Estimated budget impact. None.
 - e. Student-athlete impact. None.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS.

- 1. Agenda and meeting schedule.** The committee reviewed the agenda and schedule for the meeting and made no adjustments.
- 2. 2018 annual meeting minutes.** The committee approved its 2018 annual meeting report as written.
- 3. NCAA Division I Council/Competition Oversight Committee (COC) reports.** The committee reviewed the meeting reports from the past year, noting specific action items requested by the Women's Ice Hockey Committee and the Competition Oversight

Committee's continued review of the sustainability of championships for low-sponsorship sports.

4. Review of 2019 championship.

- a. Bracket. The committee reviewed the final championship bracket and made no changes.
- b. Championship flights – quarterfinals. The committee discussed the impact on quarterfinal pairings when the bracket is determined by the fewest number of flights, as opposed to the relative strength of the teams as determined by the committee during selections. For the 2019 bracket, no adjustments to quarterfinal pairings were required to minimize flights. However, it remains a priority for the committee to maintain bracket integrity, and a formal request for funding for flights during the quarterfinal round was submitted in February during the Division I championships budget review process.
- c. Practice times. The committee agreed that the championship practice schedule worked well and will be in place for the 2020 championship.
- d. Hotels. The committee noted that one quarterfinal host booked a hotel for the visiting team at a very high rate (approximately \$350 per night) and did not confirm enough rooms for the team's travel party, which resulted in the team staying at a different hotel with a significantly lower rate.
- e. Quarterfinals.
 - (1) Evaluations for quarterfinals. The committee reviewed participant surveys and noted that the overall feedback was positive.
 - (2) Media timeouts. The committee reviewed the media timeout policies and confirmed that all quarterfinal sites will be required to use the media timeout format to have consistency across the four sites and also consistency with the format used at the finals site.
- f. Women's Frozen Four.
 - (1) Evaluations. Overall feedback regarding the championship was very positive.
 - (2) Host institution/facility. The committee commended the staff at Quinnipiac University for providing an excellent championship experience for participating teams and attendees.
 - (3) Big Ten Network (BTN). The committee agreed that the Big Ten Network (BTN) crew and staff were great partners and provided an outstanding broadcast of the

semifinal and championship games. The BTN studio show also received positive feedback. The committee looks forward to working with BTN again for the 2020 championship. Staff noted that 2020 is the fourth year of the current four-year contract with BTN.

- (4) Championship schedule. The committee supports permitting the top-seeded team to choose whether to play in the earlier or later semifinal on Friday, anticipating that the team will choose to play in the earlier game to have more time to rest if the team advanced to the championship game on Sunday. However, the committee noted that the order of the semifinal games was determined by the broadcast partner to best maximize exposure for the championship.
- (5) Merchandise (Event 1). Average merchandise sales at the quarterfinal sites and total sales at the championship site were the highest in the history of the championship by a significant margin.
- (6) Hotels. Feedback indicated the team hotels provided the desired championship feel and experience for the participating teams. Some concerns were expressed regarding the distance from the team hotels to the venue (approximately 11 miles).
- (7) News conferences/media. The media room was set up and organized well, and the committee appreciated the local media members who provided excellent coverage for the championship.
- (8) Promotions. The host executed a comprehensive promotional plan that included a replica championship trophy used in their marketing efforts. This will be updated for 2021 and forwarded to next year's host (Boston University) to be incorporated into its marketing plan.
- (9) Banquet. For the third consecutive year, the host conducted a reception with heavy hors d'oeuvres in lieu of a plated/buffet dinner. The program featured the president of Quinnipiac University, and her message was well received by the teams. Feedback regarding this format continues to be very positive.
- (10) Awards presentation. The committee agreed that awarding only the team trophy on the ice for the national runner-up and national champion is preferred to presenting each individual on the participating teams their team mini-trophies on the ice. The committee will update the awards ceremony script to provide a clear opportunity for the national runner-up to exit the ice prior to the presentation of the trophy to the national champion.
- (11) USA Hockey. The committee appreciates its relationship with USA Hockey and looks forward to continuing this partnership in the coming years to benefit women's

ice hockey and the Women's Frozen Four. The Patty Kazmaier banquet continues to be an important and anticipated part of the championship weekend.

5. Discussion of 2020 championship.

a. Women's Frozen Four host/LOC.

- (1) Championship planning overview. Boston University will host the event for the second time. The institution provided an excellent championship experience in 2009, and the committee is confident Boston University will provide an excellent experience in 2020. NCAA staff will contact the host to determine a site visit date in the fall and the best dates for host planning teleconferences.
- (2) Facility. The championship will be held in Agganis Arena on the Boston University campus.
- (3) Hotels. The headquarters and team hotels have been contracted and the committee is confident these properties will provide an excellent championship experience for the participating teams.

b. Game times. The semifinal games in 2019 were at 4 and 7 p.m. Eastern time on Friday and the championship game was at 2:30 p.m. Eastern time Sunday. NCAA staff will consult with key internal and external stakeholders to confirm game times for the 2020 championship as soon as possible.

c. Quarterfinal facility evaluation form. The committee suggested several edits to the form.

- (1) List hotel properties that have been confirmed.
- (2) List the proximity of the hotel properties from the venue.
- (3) List the proximity of team locker rooms to the ice.
- (4) Indicate whether the ice has the recommended hash marks.

d. Hotels. The headquarters and team hotels have been contracted and the committee is confident these properties will provide an excellent championship experience for the participating teams.

e. Sport sponsorship. The committee reviewed the 2019-20 sport sponsorship and conference alignment information. Reports of schools that are adding, or are interested in adding, women's ice hockey will continue to be monitored. The committee discussed the formation of a new women's ice hockey conference, the New England Women's Ice

Hockey Alliance, and the potential impact of a new automatic qualifier on the championship field. The committee noted that current legislation requires a sport committee to award at least 50 percent of the championship field to conferences that meet automatic-qualification criteria and provide play-in criteria, and the remaining 50 percent of the championship field shall be reserved for at-large teams. The committee noted that if the NEWHA membership application is accepted, effective 2019-20, and the conference is awarded automatic qualification status in 2021-22, that would result in five automatic qualifiers in the eight-team championship field. The committee will continue to monitor the status of the new league and will determine play-in criteria as needed when the number of automatic qualifiers exceeds 50 percent of the championship field.

6. Selections.

- a. Selection criteria. The committee reviewed the selection criteria and determined no changes were needed at this time.
- b. Rating Percentage Index (RPI). The committee is reviewing the current RPI formula and evaluating a potential change from the RPI, which is calculated based on winning percentage, opponents' winning percentage and opponents' opponents' winning percentage, to an NCAA percentage index (NPI), which would be calculated based on winning percentage and the opponent's rating itself as the measure of schedule strength. The Division I Men's Ice Hockey Committee also is evaluating this potential change from the RPI to the NPI. Both committees will continue to review this topic during the 2019-20 season and will discuss this item again at their respective 2020 annual committee meetings.
- c. Selection policies and procedures. The committee reviewed policies and procedures and did not recommend changes at this time.

7. Championship format.

- a. Championship dates. The committee reviewed dates for the 2020-2022 championships and recommended no changes.
- b. Automatic qualification. The committee reviewed the automatic-qualification applications for 2019-20 and recommended that four conferences receive automatic qualification to the 2020 championship (see Action Item 2).
- c. Field size. The committee discussed the need to encourage Division I and Division II institutions to add women's ice hockey and to work to eliminate barriers for Division III institutions that sponsor women's ice hockey and may want to reclassify. The committee recognizes that increasing sport sponsorship is necessary for an expanded field size to be approved. (Note: Fifteen Division III institutions have added women's ice hockey in the past four years – from 51 institutions in 2014-15 to 66 institutions in 2018-19, which

resulted in a field size increase from eight teams to nine in 2018, and from nine teams to 10 in 2019.)

8. Officials.

- a. National coordinator report. The national coordinator of officials for women's ice hockey provided an annual report to the committee.
- b. Evaluations. Feedback from officiating crews at the quarterfinals and finals was positive.
- c. Selection of officials. The committee reviewed the process of selecting officials and discussed the priorities of confirming the best officials available, using neutral crews and minimizing travel expenses. The importance of communication between the national coordinator of officials and the committee leading up to the confirmation of the assigned officials is critical. The national coordinator, NCAA staff and committee will continue to review the process leading up to the 2020 championship and will make modifications if necessary.
- d. Recommendation form. The committee will review the format and content of the recommendation form completed by conference supervisors of officials and provide feedback regarding potential updates to the form.
- e. Evaluation form. The committee requested that the national coordinator develop an evaluation form that he will complete as he observes officials at games throughout the season and then provide to the committee.

9. Rules. The committee met with the Ice Hockey Rules Committee to review rules that were changed last year, how rule changes (e.g., overtime procedures) affect the RPI, and the results of the video replay survey.

- a. Rules book. The rules committee noted it was considering expanding the portion of the rules book that is specific to women's ice hockey.
- b. Rules video. The two committees agreed that the women's ice hockey rules video is a valuable tool and the quality of the video is better each year as additional video clips become available to illustrate what is and is not a penalty.
- c. Physicality. The committees noted that there seem to be some regional differences in the physicality allowed in women's ice hockey, with officials in the West region allowing more contact than officials in the East region. This lack of consistency can cause confusion for teams that travel to play in the other region regarding what penalties will or will not be called. In addition, officials tend to call games tighter at the beginning of the season and

then looser as the season progresses. The committees believe the Division I membership would support permitting additional physicality in the women's game.

- d. Supplemental discipline. The committee recommended no changes to the supplemental discipline policy at this time.
- e. Sport statistical trends. The committee reviewed the season statistical trend data.

10. Committee updates.

- a. National and regional advisory committee composition and vacancies. The committee noted that when committee member Mike Sisti's term ends in August, the remaining composition of the national committee will be three members from the East region and one member from the West region. The committee noted that although the legislation does not mandate the number of women's ice hockey committee members from each region, it is valuable to have a coach and an administrator from each region on the committee and, if possible, a representative from each automatic-qualifying conference. Once the new national committee member is confirmed, NCAA staff will contact the appropriate conference commissioners for assistance filling the RAC vacancies.
- b. Committee timeline. The committee reviewed and approved an updated timeline for the 2019-20 year.
- c. Confirmation of committee chair. The committee approved that Abbey Strong, assistant athletics director – compliance and camps at the University of Minnesota Duluth, continue to serve as chair.
- d. American Hockey Coaches Association Convention recap. The committee reviewed its annual report and will update the report accordingly for the 2020 AHCA Convention.
- e. Future meeting. The 2020 annual meeting will be held in Indianapolis June 2-3, in conjunction with the other divisional ice hockey committees and the ice hockey rules committee.

11. Site selection and 2022-26 bid process. The committee reviewed the bid specifications for the upcoming bid process and recommended edits to the materials.

12. Conference commissioners. The committee met with the ice hockey conference commissioners to review the 2020 championship and discuss key issues pertaining to the championship and women's ice hockey. Specifically, the committee and commissioners discussed the potential impact of a new automatic qualifier on the championship field, how to increase sport sponsorship and the championship bracket size, each league having a

representative on the national committee and commissioners potentially paying for flights for their officiating crews to be at the finals site.

13. Other business.

- a. Women's ice hockey review. The committee spoke with Val Ackerman, the commissioner of the Big East Conference, via teleconference about growing women's ice hockey and a potential change to the championship date formula to better showcase the Women's Frozen Four and minimize current conflicts with television coverage of NCAA basketball. Championship date options discussed include late February or the same weekend as the NCAA Men's Frozen Four. The committee discussed the potential impact of a change to the championship date formula, including the opportunity to increase the visibility of the Women's Frozen Four, challenges due to institutional academic calendars and the timing of other national and international ice hockey events. The committee did not recommend a change at this time.
- b. Strategic plan. The committee reviewed a draft of a strategic plan for the championship and provided feedback. The committee will work to finalize the plan during the 2019-20 season.

Committee Chair: Abbey Strong, University of Minnesota Duluth, Western Collegiate Hockey Association

Staff Liaison: Jan Gentry, Championships and Alliances

NCAA Women's Ice Hockey Committee June 4-5, 2019, Meeting	
Attendees:	
Anita Brenner, Cornell University.	
Katie Crowley, Boston College.	
Kate McAfee, University of New Hampshire.	
Mike Sisti, Mercyhurst University.	
Abbey Strong, University of Minnesota Duluth.	
Absentees:	
None.	
NCAA Staff Support in Attendance:	
Jan Gentry, Championships and Alliances.	
Paige Newman, Championships and Alliances.	
Other Guests in Attendance:	
Val Ackerman, Big East Conference (via teleconference).	
Joe Bertagna, Hockey East Association.	
Tim Danehy, College Hockey Stats.	
Robert DeGregorio, College Hockey America.	

Tom DiFusco, NCAA Women's National Coordinator of Officials.
Steve Hagwell, ECAC Hockey.
Robert Ludwig, Western Collegiate Hockey Association.
Bill Robertson, Western Collegiate Hockey Association.