REPORT OF THE
NCAA DIVISION I MEN'S SOCCER OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE
JANUARY 28-29, 2026, ANNUAL MEETING VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

***ACTION ITEMS*.**

- **None.**

***INFORMATIONAL ITEMS*.**

1. Legislative items.

a. Playing and practice seasons legislation.

(1) Action. The NCAA Division I Men's Soccer Oversight Committee introduced legislation to amend the men's soccer playing and practice season as specified. If adopted, the legislation would become effective August 1, 2027 (Attachment).

(2) Effective date. August 1, 2027.

(3) Rationale. The Men's Soccer Oversight Committee introduced the legislation because it believes the current NCAA Division I men's soccer playing and practice season, compressed into a 10-13 week fall window, no longer reflects the realities of the sport or the expectations placed on today's men's soccer student-athletes. Established in 1959, this structure is misaligned with modern standards in athlete well-being, soccer development, and fan engagement.

Soccer is the world's most popular sport and is experiencing unprecedented growth in the United States. The 2026 FIFA World Cup, hosted in North America, is projected to reach approximately six billion viewers globally, while domestic investments continue to accelerate, as reflected in the rapid growth of Major League Soccer (MLS) franchise valuations. NCAA men's soccer exists within this expanding ecosystem, yet its seasonal model remains antiquated and disconnected from the sport's broader trajectory. A redistributed and decompressed playing and practice season spanning consecutive academic terms would better align NCAA men's soccer with the sport's established norms at every other level; youth, amateur, professional, domestic and international. In fact, MLS has announced it will be moving its season to a similar structure with a fall and spring season culminating with a May championship beginning with the 2027-28 season.

For NCAA men's soccer, this approach may support improved physical health and performance, more effective technical and tactical development, and a greater balanced academic and athletics experience. Importantly, the

proposal emphasizes redistribution of existing resources rather than expansion, allowing institutions to modernize while focusing on cost containment.

In addition, a revised season structure aligns with U.S. Soccer initiatives, reduces incentives for midyear transfers (as observed in other sports with spring championships), and creates a framework capable of supporting future growth and investment. By improving continuity and quality in the student-athlete experience, the NCAA can enhance competitive integrity and long-term engagement without increasing overall expenditures.

In summary, this proposal represents a low-risk, high-upside opportunity. Maintaining the status quo presents greater risk than pursuing thoughtful reform. Adopting a redistributed and decompressed season reflects a forward-looking, growth-oriented approach that better serves student-athletes and the NCAA's long-term interests in the world's most popular and fastest-growing sport.

(4) Estimated budget impact. The estimated budget impact of the proposal varies by institution. The overall budget impact of the proposed model is expected to be minimal, with some variation across institutions and conferences. Dividing the championship season across both academic terms may modestly extend certain operational demands, such as support staff coverage and facility access. These costs are expected to be offset by efficiencies gained through improved scheduling flexibility and closer alignment with institutional academic calendars.

Additionally, preseason expenses are projected to decline, potentially significantly in some cases, as preseason activity would be reduced by approximately two to three weeks. Initial preseason training would align more closely with institutional academic calendars rather than beginning in early August or late July, resulting in decreased housing, meal, staffing, and operational costs associated with supporting student-athletes outside the academic term. Finally, summer school participation is also expected to decrease, as extended summer residency and accelerated graduation timelines would no longer provide meaningful competitive advantages.

(5) Student-athlete impact. Modernizing the NCAA men's soccer playing and practice season is a student-athlete well-being initiative designed to better balance academic and athletics priorities throughout the collegiate experience. A redistributed and decompressed season spanning consecutive semesters would meaningfully reduce time demands during any single

academic term, resulting in fewer midweek contests, less missed class time, and greater on campus time.

This improved alignment supports stronger academic performance, enhanced retention, and increased degree completion, while preserving competitive integrity. Additionally, a modernized season would distribute training and competition more evenly, enabling improved load management, enhanced recovery and post-injury return-to-play protocols, while aligning with evidence-based best practices in high-performance sport. This may result in a more responsible competitive environment that prioritizes long-term athlete health.

Finally, a redistributed and decompressed season offers a more sustainable and developmentally appropriate model, distributing physical, cognitive, and emotional demands across consecutive semesters. This approach reduces chronic stress, supports healthier daily routines, facilitates deeper engagement with teammates, coaches and coaching concepts, and allows student-athletes to participate more fully in campus life. These outcomes directly align with the NCAA's commitment to holistic student-athlete well-being.

b. **NCAA Division I legislative discussion.** The Men's Soccer Oversight Committee reviewed several legislative recommendations from the NCAA Division I Men's Soccer Oversight Committee Subcommittee:

(1) **Redistribution of the playing season/flex model proposal.** The committee agreed with the subcommittee's recommendation that education (e.g. webinars, question and answer document, conference and CCACA meeting presentations) be provided to the membership and key stakeholders in spring 2026 regarding the new playing and practice seasons model noted above. The committee also agreed with the subcommittee's recommendation to use the formal legislative comment period to collect feedback from the membership on the proposal, rather than conduct a membership survey. Finally, the committee noted it will review membership feedback during its upcoming meetings to determine if any modifications to the proposal are necessary.

(2) **Notification of transfer.** The committee discussed the subcommittee's recommendation for future legislative change regarding the current notification-of-transfer rules. Specifically, the committee discussed the subcommittee's recommendation to consider a legislative change that would decrease the window to one 15- or 30-day consecutive period beginning after the conclusion of the NCAA Division I Men's Soccer College

Cup in the spring. The committee charged the subcommittee with continuing to discuss the notification-of-transfer rules and develop a formal recommendation for the committee to consider during its March meeting.

c. **2026 first contest date legislative relief blanket waiver.** Upon the recommendation of the subcommittee, the committee directed the staff to approve a legislative relief blanket waiver for men's soccer for the 2026 fall season that permits Division I men's soccer teams to engage in outside competition on the Thursday before the 13th weekend before the start of the 2026 NCAA Division I Men's Soccer Championship. For the 2026-27 academic year, an institution may play its first regular-season contest or engage in its first date of competition (game) with outside competition in men's soccer beginning on August 20, 2026.

d. **Playing rules subcommittee update.** The committee was provided an update from the Division I Men's Soccer Rules Subcommittee, noting that men's and women's soccer are in a rules change year.

e. **Broadcast update.** The committee received an update from ESPN and the broadcast liaisons on the success of the 2025 regular season and the 2025 Division I Men's College Cup, including an update on level of production value and ratings from the previous year. The committee and ESPN discussed the effects of redistributing the playing season model and emphasized the operational challenges, during both the regular season and postseason, associated with shifting to the spring championship segment and specifically to a May timeframe.

f. **Championship subcommittee updates.**

(1) **Review of 2025 championship.** The committee received an update on the successful 2025 Division I Men's Soccer Championship. The Town of Cary, First Horizon Stadium at WakeMed Park, and the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, have continued to be a great partners and supporters of the College Cup. The continued partnership with NCFC Youth provides a significant boost in attendance and enhanced game environment for the Friday semifinal matches.

(2) **Preliminary-round hosting expectations.** The committee received an update on the recommendations from the Men's Soccer Championship Subcommittee, which met on site during the 2025 College Cup. The update included expanded language regarding hotel standards, practice expectations, and field surface policies. These recommendations outline a standard 90-minute practice window the day prior to competition and clarified that the playing surface is determined at the host site's discretion, provided it is consistent for both teams.

(3) **Selection criteria.** The committee reviewed the current championship selection criteria and did not make any adjustments for the 2026 championship.

(4) **Consideration of other ranking systems.** The committee confirmed maintaining the same process for ranking and selection for the 2026 season. The group emphasized the importance and value of the regional advisory committee voice and will continue to conduct weekly calls with the RACs in advance of the championship selection.

(5) **Video exchange process.** The committee reviewed the final report of video exchange compliance and assessed warnings and financial penalties as necessary.

(6) **Misconduct and sportsmanship review.** The committee reviewed misconduct and sportsmanship related issues that took place during the championship and communicated directly with institutions involved.

g. **Tentative automatic qualifiers for the 2026 championship.** The committee received an update on the tentative automatic qualifiers for the 2026 Division I Men's Soccer Championship. The committee will reconvene after the automatic qualification deadline and review the conferences that submitted a request for AQ access.

h. **Officiating updates.** The committee received an update from the NCAA national coordinator of officials regarding the selection and assignment processes, the evaluation of officials, and the coaches' evaluation of officiating performance.

i. **U.S. Soccer NextGen White Paper review.** The committee reviewed the U.S. Soccer NextGen White Paper recommendations and did not take any additional action at this time.

j. **Joint men's and women's soccer committee meeting.** The men's and women's soccer committees met jointly to discuss a variety of topics, including the 2026 championships, committee priorities, and future sites. More information can be found in the joint committee report.

k. **Approval of the NCAA Division I Men's Soccer Oversight Committee reports.** The committee approved its December 9 and December 12 reports.

Committee Chair: *Brian Mackin, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Southern Conference*
Staff Liaison(s): *Micaela Kapsalis, Championships and Alliances*
Abigail Markey, Division I for Governance and Member Services
Sara Thurber, Division I for Governance and Member Services

NCAA Division I Men's Soccer Oversight Committee January 28-29, 2026, Videoconference
Attendees:
Greg Busch, Princeton University.
John Collins, NCAA National Coordinator of Officials.
Chris Dietrich, Fordham University.
Rob Emmerich, Stony Brook University.
Rob Kehoe, United Soccer Coaches Representative.
Brian Mackin, The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.
Quinn Millerd, Drake University.
Patrick O'Toole, University of Michigan.
Russell Payne, Northwestern University, Big Ten Conference.
Chris Schneider, Big East Conference.
Evan Schroeder, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.
Carlos Somoano, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Atlantic Coast Conference.
Kathy Sulentic, University of Memphis, American Conference.
Kevin White, James Madison University, Sun Belt Conference.
Absentees:
Rich Grady, NCAA Men's Soccer Secretary-Rules Editor.
Guests in Attendance:
Ian Dunning, ESPN.
Mallory Kenny, ESPN.
Daniel Kole, ESPN.
Nicholas Rud, ESPN.
Michael Seabolt, Missouri State University.
NCAA Staff Liaisons in Attendance:
Micaela Kapsalis and Abigail Markey.
Other NCAA Staff Members in Attendance:
Tommy Barrett, Jejuan Bowser, Stanley Broaden, Raymon Gaddis, Julie Kimmons, Leilyn Miles, Emma Potter and Jerry Vaughn.

Fall Segment - 2027 Example

ATTACHMENT

FALL SEGMENT (73 days)

Outside of Playing Season – During Academic Year

Start of school's academic year through conclusion of term

- Does not count towards playing season
- CARA limitations: 8 hours/week max; 2 days off/week

Preseason – 14 days

8/26/27: First Possible Date of Preseason Practice

- Counts towards playing season
- CARA limitations: 20 hours/week max; 1 day off/week

Regular Season – 11 weeks

9/9/27: First Possible Contest Date

11/20/27: End of Regular Playing Season

Sample Fall Break – 2 days

CARA prohibited; Does not count toward playing season

Discretionary Period – 7 days

CARA prohibited; Does not count toward playing season

Aug 2027

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

Sep 2027

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

Oct 2027

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

Nov 2027

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
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14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

Dec 2027

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

Note: Transition Period (August 19-25) is only for those schools not in session.

Spring Segment - 2028 Example

SPRING SEGMENT (59 days)

Outside of Playing Season – During Academic Year

Start of school's winter/spring term through conclusion of term

- Does not count towards playing season
- CARA limitations: 8 hours/week max; 2 days off/week

Preseason – 14 days

2/4/28: First Possible Date of Preseason Practice

- Counts towards playing season
- CARA limitations: 20 hours/week max; 1 day off/week

Regular Season – 9 weeks

2/18/28: First Possible Contest Date

Sample Spring Break – 3 days

CARA prohibited; Does not count toward playing season

NCAA Selection Show – 4/16/28

Post Season – 48 teams

5/15/28: Men's College Cup National Championship

Jan 2028

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

Feb 2028

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29				

Mar 2028

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

Apr 2028

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

May 2028

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

Jun 2028

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
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Note: Transition Period (January 28- February 3) is only for those schools not in session.