



REPORT OF THE
NCAA DIVISION II SOFTBALL COMMITTEE
JUNE 18-19, 2019, MEETING

ACTION ITEMS.

1. **Legislative items.**

- **None.**

2. **Nonlegislative items.**

a. **Bench limit increase from 26 to 28.**

- (1) **Recommendation.** That the bench limit for the championship tournament be increased from 26 to 28.
- (2) **Effective date.** September 1, 2019.
- (3) **Rationale.** According to NCAA research, the squad size for regular season is larger than the bench limit at the NCAA championship (21 versus 20). Teams currently are bringing more players with them to the preliminary rounds and finals site and with a larger bench limit, those players would now be able to sit in the dugout for the games instead of in the stands. This recommendation does not include an increase in the number of players who can dress (20) or the travel party (26).

The current travel party allows for six non-athletes. With the potential to bring additional athletes, the committee requests a bench limit of 28 to account for the growing staffs responsible for the roster sizes.

This request is not budgetary because the NCAA would not pay for additional mementos, awards, travel or per diem. The committee feels having those additional student-athletes in the dugout instead of in the stands is an enhanced student-athlete experience even if those student-athletes do not receive the other perks of being in the travel party. Most institutions participating in the championship already bring their entire rosters, so this change would allow the additional student-athletes in the dugout. Institutions also can purchase additional awards or banquet tickets for these athletes if they choose.

This adjustment would align softball with other sports in Division II that allow bench sizes that are larger than the travel party size (see below).

Sport	Travel Party Size	Bench Size
Men's Basketball	20	23
Baseball	29	34
Women's Basketball	20	23
Men's Lacrosse	34	48
Women's Lacrosse	30	38
Women's Soccer	28	32
Volleyball	20	25

- (4) Estimated budget impact. None.
- (5) Student-athlete impact. This recommendation will have a positive impact on the student-athletes participating in the championship. Each year, the committee reads comments from participants who sat in the stands and watched their teams compete from afar. These comments show dissatisfaction with the current bench limit. This increased bench limit would allow the student-athletes who play and contribute during the regular season to be part of the championship experience.

b. Method for seeding teams advancing to the final site of competition.

- (1) Recommendation. That the method for seeding teams advancing to the final site be modified such that the regional rating percentage index (RPI) uses data only from the regular season and compares where the RPI ranks within a region.
- (2) Effective date. September 1, 2019.
- (3) Rationale. Currently, the committee uses data from all competition (including regular season and preliminary rounds) to determine regional RPI and then seeds teams advancing to the final site based on that RPI number. Since teams do not control their opponents or whether they play in more games than other institutions in the postseason, the committee prefers to use only regular-season data for seeding at the final site. Additionally, the committee feels that evaluating how a regional RPI compares within a region should factor into the seeding process. For example, two teams' regional RPI raw number could be .624 but one team could have the highest RPI in its region and the other team could have the fourth-highest RPI in its region. In that case, the team with the highest RPI in its region would be assigned the higher seed for the national championship.
- (4) Estimated budget impact. None.

- (5) Student-athlete impact. This method of seeding teams advancing to the final site will have a positive impact on the student-athletes by attempting to ensure the best teams at the final site meet in the championship final series.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS.

- 1. Review of 2018 meeting report.** The committee approved the 2018 annual meeting report as written.
- 2. Division II Championships Committee updates.** Staff provided updates on Championships Committee actions over the previous year. Highlights from these updates include the removal of softball from the 2020 festival, the approval of the 2020 championship site and a reminder regarding the requirement for hosts to stream all preliminary-round games starting in 2020. The committee also noted Championships Committee support regarding sport committee discretion when awarding preliminary-round hosts if hotels are too far away.

The committee also discussed and recommended an increase to the bench size as noted in Action item 2-a.

- 3. Division II governance and academic and membership affairs update.** Chelsea Hooks from the academic and membership affairs staff reviewed potential legislative items for the 2020 NCAA Convention. She also updated the committee on the rollout of DII University, a coaches' educational tool launched last spring and the new requirements for coaches' certifications through the tool. Ms. Hooks also mentioned the release of non-required championship regionalization and selection modules coming out later this summer.
- 4. NFCA convention report.** Brian Stanley from the National Fastpitch Coaches Association (NFCA) and Gretta Melsted, head coach at Augustana University (South Dakota), provided an update for the committee. Members discussed feedback from the coaches regarding the championship and possible adjustments that could enhance the participant experience. Much of the feedback from coaches was positive but the committee noted some items to improve such as consistent policies across all championship manuals and training for site representatives. The committee also agreed with the feedback from the NFCA that the social media presence at the championship site should be improved. Staff will work internally to ensure coverage is championship caliber.
- 5. Championship manuals and site selection materials review.** The committee reviewed the 2019 manuals and made necessary updates for the 2020 championship. The committee noted some additions to the facility information provided by potential host institutions to ensure all host sites are capable of hosting and providing a great experience.

6. **Committee timeline review.** The committee discussed the timeline and made necessary updates for the 2020 season.
7. **Review of NCAA playing rules and barrel compression testing (BCT).** Dee Abrahamson provided a bat testing update for the committee. She noted that Division II continues to experience the most failed bats during the regular season and postseason as compared to the other divisions. She mentioned this could be due to the level of testing already occurring in Division I. The committee asked for more information on whether harsher penalties could be imposed on coaches with bats that fail bat testing.

Ms. Abrahamson also noted that the Softball Rules Committee is discussing whether bat testing should be mandatory in the regular season. If the rules committee agrees to require new procedures, she expects any change would have a delayed implementation date to give the membership time to make the financial commitment. The committee agreed that bat testing is an important safety measure and asked that if the rule passes, that it be effective a different year than the required baseball testing, so institutions do not have to absorb those costs in the same year.

Vickie Van Kleeck, NCAA softball secretary-rules editor, also joined the meeting to discuss pertinent agenda items from the Softball Rules Committee meeting. The committee asked questions regarding what umpires should or should not be responsible for enforcing during a game such as props in the dugout and artificial noisemakers. The committee feels that any rules included in the rulebook should be enforced by the umpires and that those rules should be removed if they cannot be enforced due to other umpire responsibilities.

8. **Umpires.** Craig Hyde, national coordinator of umpires, joined the meeting to review the umpire program and seek feedback from the committee on any necessary adjustments to the program. All postseason umpires must pass rules and mechanics testing yearly. Hyde noted that coaches can also use the training and educational resources provided through Arbiter.

Mr. Hyde also discussed the postseason assigning process with the committee. He mentioned that he, along with other top assignors, continue to build a base of which umpires are doing well in the regular and postseason. The committee asked that umpires who perform well during regionals continue to move forward in the postseason instead of sometimes being replaced by a Division I umpire for super regionals since more umpires are available at that point.

9. **Rankings process review.** The committee felt the rankings process ran smoothly. Members reiterated the importance of the speaking agent policy and referring all calls and questions to the national committee chair. The committee also discussed whether more rankings were necessary to accurately evaluate all teams. Members agreed that the amount and timing of ranking calls is appropriate due to the “results against teams above .500” and “results against ranked teams” selection criteria.

10. Selections review. The committee reviewed the 2019 selection criteria and recommended an adjustment to the method for seeding the teams advancing to the final site (see Action Item 2-b).

The committee felt the selection process ran smoothly. Members noted the 10 a.m. Eastern selection announcement is difficult for student-athletes because it occurs during class. After some discussion, the committee agreed the timing is appropriate since moving the announcement to Sunday night may impact the automatic qualification deadline, which in turn could impact missed class time for conference tournaments.

11. Regional and super regional review. The committee reviewed the participant evaluations from regionals and super regionals. Overall, participants enjoyed their experiences in those rounds. The committee made the following adjustments to policies:

- Modified the “home/away” designation process for the if-necessary game in the super regionals to mirror the process used for regionals and the championship final series.
- Approved a motion to change the naming protocol for preliminary rounds. Instead of the region and site number (e.g., Atlantic 1 and Atlantic 2), the site will be named by the city in which the games are played (e.g., Institute, WV Regional and West Liberty, WV Regional).
- In the future, both head coaches or a designee from each institution must be present for the coin toss. At the championship final site, the designee may be a committee representative.
- Agreed to emphasize more to site representatives that any behavior that violates a championship policy could be a misconduct or failure to adhere to policies and procedures and all those issues should be presented to the championship manager.
- Modified shared line drills. In the future, teams will conduct line drills separately. Both teams will take the field 30 minutes prior to first pitch. At the 25-minute mark, the home team will take line drills. At the 18-minute mark, the visiting team will take line drills. At the 11-minute mark, teams will clear the field and the umpire meeting will occur.
- To emphasize the importance of sportsmanship and fan behavior, the committee recommended having a student-athlete read the crowd control statement prior to each game. The committee also asked that team administrators play a larger role in ensuring a fair and safe game environment.

12. 2019 championship review. Jerrid Oates, championship tournament director from MSU Denver, joined the meeting via teleconference to review the participant evaluations. The committee praised the staff from MSU Denver for their roles in hosting a successful championship. The committee specifically noted the level of hospitality and attention to detail throughout the tournament. Members mentioned a few adjustments for MSU Denver to implement when the championship returns to Denver in 2021.

13. Preview of 2020 championship final site. Committee members approved the regional, super regional and final site brackets for 2020. The 2020 championship will be hosted by the Chattanooga Sports Committee, Lee University and the University of North Georgia in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

The committee talked briefly about the bracket for the final site and how to ensure, aside from seeding, that the best two teams reach the final series. After reviewing different options for where to move teams in the bracket, the committee agreed to keep the advancement procedures as is.

14. Review of 2023-26 bid cycle and softball bid specifications. The committee reviewed the timeline for the next bid cycle and the minimum requirements to host. Members specifically noted that championship facilities should have bullpens that are similar in size, composition, proximity to the dugout and number of pitching plates and mounds.

15. Review 2021-24 triennial budget process. Staff updated the committee on the request process and timeline for the upcoming budget cycle. The committee started initial conversations on possible budget requests including adding two members to the travel party and increasing the officiating crews from three umpires to four in the postseason.

16. Review Division II Softball Committee strategic plan. Staff reviewed the strategic planning document and the committee identified short- and long-term goals and strategies for the championship. The full strategic plan is in Attachment A.

17. Review Division II Championships Committee request regarding neutrality in preliminary rounds. The committee reviewed the request from the Championships Committee. In discussing the questions from the Championships Committee, the Softball Committee agreed that season-ticket holders should have first right of refusal in the postseason if the visiting teams have equitable access. Members also agreed that neutrality should be maintained in pre- and in-game announcements and promotions.

18. Review of regionalization map and sponsorship list. Committee members reviewed the regionalization map and sponsorship list and noted changes for 2019-20. Staff shared that the map and list will be finalized in August.

19. Committee chair appointment. The committee voted to appoint Kristy Bayer, deputy director of athletics/senior woman administrator at Emporia State University, as chair of the committee. Ms. Bayer has served on the committee for three years and will provide great leadership and guidance for the committee.

20. 2020 annual meeting dates. The committee will hold its next annual meeting June 16-17 in Indianapolis.

Committee Chair: Brandon Davis, San Francisco State University
Staff Liaison: Molly Simons, Championships and Alliances

Division II Softball Committee June 18-19, 2019, Meeting
Attendees:
Kristy Bayer, Emporia State University.
Brandon Davis, San Francisco State University.
Donna Fields, St. Mary’s University (Texas).
Rob Fournier, Wayne State University (Michigan).
Dean Johnson, Caldwell University.
Patrick Peasant, Miles College.
Stacey Vallee, Francis Marion University.
John Wilson Jr., Virginia State University.
Absentees:
None.
Guests in Attendance:
Dee Abrahamson, NCAA barrel compression testing liaison.
Gretta Melsted, Augustana University (South Dakota). <i>(via teleconference)</i>
Craig Hyde, NCAA softball national umpire coordinator.
Jerrid Oates, Metropolitan State University of Denver. <i>(via teleconference)</i>
Brian Stanley, NFCA. <i>(via teleconference)</i>
Vickie Van Kleeck, NCAA softball secretary-rules editor.
NCAA Staff Support in Attendance:
Molly Simons, Championships and Alliances.
Other NCAA Staff Members in Attendance:
Chelsea C. Hooks, Academic and Membership Affairs.



NCAA Division II Softball Committee Strategic Plan

Introduction

The first NCAA Division II Softball Championship occurred in 1982 with Sam Houston State winning the inaugural event. Over the years, the bracket has increased to a 64-team field with eight teams selected from each region. The double-elimination tournament features 16 sites in the regional round and eight sites in the super regional round. The eight regional winners compete in an 8-team, double-elimination tournament to determine the champion. The championship final is a best-of-three series.

The championship has typically been hosted at neutral sites across the country. It is also part of the Division II National Championship Spring Festival. Preliminary rounds are hosted on campus sites.

Core Purpose

The purpose of the Division II Softball Committee is:

- To plan and execute a highly competitive, quality national championship event that creates a memorable experience for the student-athlete.
- To provide fair and equitable competition through championship policies, governance, rules oversight and interpretation.
- To promote and grow NCAA softball.

Vision

The vision of the Division II Softball Committee is to ensure NCAA softball student-athletes are provided a first-class championship that offers top-level competition and showcases the high-quality skill of collegiate softball athletes.

Core Values

The Division II Softball Committee's Core Values are:

1. Demonstrate good character and sound judgment with decision-making responsibilities on behalf of the membership.



2. The committee will provide a fair and equitable environment for all championships and regular season competitions.
3. Softball will remain a sport that is safe and enjoyable for all student-athletes, coaches, staff and spectators.
4. To be good stewards of the championship environment and to foster great regular season competition, the committee must actively promote the sport's growth and advancement.

Goals

Short-Term Goals and Strategies

1. For the safety of all softball athletes, support the NCAA softball rules committee in its efforts to require regular-season bat testing.
2. Increase the travel party to 28 individuals to create more opportunities for student-athletes based on average roster sizes.
3. Move to a 4-person umpiring crew to increase the integrity of the game and ensure a fair and equitable playing field. If funding cannot support the increase for the entire postseason, recommend for the finals site only.
4. Execute a quality championship at a first-time venue (Frost Stadium in Chattanooga).
5. Implement strategies to encourage a friendlier game environment.

Long-Term Goals and Strategies

1. Think strategically about the possibility of a long-term finals site and how that decision could grow the game. Potentially find three solid hosting locations and rotate among them.
2. Capitalize on the growth of the sport and continue to increase its visibility. For example, start with growing the fanbase by having "theme" nights or showcase games to connect with local host communities. Increase the social media presence, both internally and externally, to showcase the championship.
3. Continue to explore ways to have regional crossover during the super regional round.