



REPORT OF THE
NCAA DIVISION III SOFTBALL COMMITTEE
JULY 10, 2024, ANNUAL MEETING

KEY ITEMS.

1. **Automatic qualification.** The committee requests that all eligible conferences receive automatic qualification for the 2025 championship (with the addition of the Collegiate Conference of the South in its first year of AQ eligibility). (See Action Item 2.)
2. **Site selection for the 2027 and 2028 championships.** The committee discussed the strategy and vision behind selecting the finals sites for 2027 and 2028. (See Informational Item 4.)
3. **Committee chair and vice chair.** The committee elected Jessica Hollen as the 2024-25 committee chair and Casie Runksmeier as the 2024-25 vice chair. (See Informational Item 7.)

ACTION ITEMS.

1. **Legislative items.**

- None

2. **Nonlegislative items.**

- **Automatic qualification.**

- a. **Recommendation.** Approve the following 42 conferences for automatic qualification to the 2025 NCAA Division III Softball Championship: Allegheny Mountain Collegiate Conference, American Rivers Conference, American Southwest Conference, Atlantic East Conference, Centennial Conference, City University of New York Athletic Conference, College Conference of Illinois and Wisconsin, **Collegiate Conference of the South (eligible 2024-25)**, Commonwealth Coast Conference, Empire 8, Great Northeast Athletic Conference, Heartland Collegiate Athletic Conference, Landmark Conference, Liberty League, Little East Conference, Massachusetts State Collegiate Athletic Conference, Michigan Intercollegiate Athletic Conference Association, Middle Atlantic Conference – Commonwealth, Middle Atlantic Conference – Freedom, Midwest Conference, Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference, New England Small College Athletic Conference, New England Women's and Men's Athletic Conference, New Jersey Athletic Conference, North Atlantic Conference, North Coast Athletic Conference, Northern Athletics Collegiate Conference, Northwest Conference, Ohio Athletic Conference, Old Dominion Athletic Conference, Presidents' Athletic Conference, Skyline Conference, Southern Athletic Association, Southern California Intercollegiate Athletic Conference, Southern Collegiate Athletic Conference, St. Louis Intercollegiate Athletic Conference, State University of New York Athletic Conference, United East

Conference, University Athletic Association, Upper Midwest Athletic Conference, USA South Athletic Conference, and Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference.

- b. Effective date. September 1, 2024.
- c. Rationale. Each conference meets the requirements of NCAA Bylaw 31.3.3 and has completed the automatic - qualification declaration form. (NOTE: The Collegiate Conference of the South is now eligible for automatic qualification in 2024-25. There will no longer be Pool B allocations.)

Anticipated Pool Allocations: Automatic Qualifiers – 42, At Large – 22.

- d. Estimated budget impact. None.
- e. Student-athlete impact. None.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS.

- 3. **2023 annual meeting report.** The committee approved the 2023 annual meeting report as submitted.
- 4. **Automatic qualification, pool breakdown and regional alignment.** The committee was reminded that the Collegiate Conference of the South will be eligible in 2024-25 for automatic qualification. Staff noted conference membership changes will be confirmed once the 2024-25 sponsorship information is available.
- 5. **Discussion with the acting national Division III Coordinator of Officials, NCAA Softball Equipment Coordinator and Secretary-Rules Editor.** The committee met with Glenda Bates, the acting coordinator of Division III officials, Vickie Van Kleeck (on Tuesday, July 9), secretary-rules editor, Dee Abrahamson, softball equipment consultant, and Dave Hines and Leslie Huntingdon from the NFCA to discuss the postseason assignment process, evaluation of umpires, the bat testing program, video review process at the championship, and input from the NFCA membership.
 - a. **Officials' selection process.** Ms. Bates reviewed the process used for selecting officials and the changes in the coordinator timeline. Discussion ensued regarding the benefit of changing the selection timeline for officials and the desire to standardize the conference coordinator recommendation process, including timeliness and the necessary requirements and process for umpires to advance to postseason. This discussion also included the role of the conference coordinators in umpire training. Additional discussion addressed the video review process at the championship site and the benefit of relaying the play under review

and the outcome of the review to the spectators and press box staff. Staff provided information about the discussions taking place regarding the modification from regional umpire advisors to national coordinators at the Divisions II and III levels. The committee asked that the protocol be clarified as to where an ejected coach should be sent after an ejection. Ms. Bates noted that recommendation will be added to the committee agenda for the coaches at the championship. Ms. Bates and the committee were pleased with the addition of a seventh official at the championship site and strongly support that the seventh official continues being appointed for the finals site.

- b. **Video review at the championship.** The committee confirmed the benefit of having a microphone available for the official to announce the play under review and then the results of the review. The committee will add that request for the committee chair and the championship manager to discuss with the host on the site visit in the fall of 2024 for the 2025 championship. The committee discussed camera locations for the review process and recommended that two cameras be added at the championship site to ensure that the necessary coverage is possible for all video review needs.
- c. **Rules review.** On Tuesday, July 9, the committee and Ms. Van Kleeck participated in a rules modification review on a conference call with members of the NCAA Softball Rules Committee and Ashlee Follis from the NCAA playing rules staff. This review took place to discuss the membership reaction to three modifications the rules committee proposed. The committee vetted the proposals and approved the modifications. Those modifications will be implemented for the 2024-25 season pending approval from the NCAA Playing Rules Oversight Panel.
- d. **Bat testing.** Ms. Abrahamson reported the statistics from bat testing throughout the year and championship. A discussion followed, initiated by committee members about the need for more consistency for bat testing throughout the season and at the regional and super regional rounds. The committee supports the program but continues to be concerned about implementing the process at campus sites, the qualifications and training lacking for the testing personnel at some sites and the need to evaluate the role of the site representatives at the regional and super regional sites regarding bat testing. The committee agreed to discuss this topic more and propose suggestions for addressing bat testing issues.
- e. **Division III Championships Committee Updates.** Laura Peterson provided updates on the recent actions taken and recommendations proposed by the Division III Championship Committee. She provided information about the increases in per diem for teams and hosts scheduled to be implemented starting in 2025 and continuing through the 2028 championships. She confirmed that the Division III softball bracket will be increased to 64 teams in 2025 due to the approved change in the access ratio.

The Championships Committee has proposed a two-year waiver of the bracketing protocol regarding geographic proximity requirements of the bracketing principles, which should

allow committees to separate and protect the top teams in regions in the early rounds of the championship. Championship managers will be asked to describe the specific benefits for their sports that this waiver will provide for their championships.

Mrs. Peterson confirmed that the Division III national coordinator of officials position has been approved and that the process of appointing this individual has begun.

The Championships Committee also has set a goal to have all regional and super regional rounds web streamed. To assist in meeting that goal, a two-year plan will be put into place to provide each regional round host \$1,000 per day for web streaming. This funding may be used for equipment and/or personnel. This two-year program will then be re-evaluated.

The NPI implementation timeline and specifics were discussed, and it was confirmed that the Division III softball membership will be offered the opportunity to participate in an educational webinar about the NPI. A link to the NPI will be provided to the membership on NCAA.com. Questions about the role of the RAC were raised and suggestions were made about how the RAC members will be used differently. One suggestion/request was for RAC members to be trained as site representatives, which will be very helpful in securing qualified site representatives for the regional and super regional rounds of the championship.

- f. **NFCA update.** Dave Hines and Leslie Huntington reported on the evaluations from their membership on the championship rounds. They summarized the evaluations received and emailed a summary to the committee. Among the questions from their constituents was about the umpire evaluation process at the championship sites. The Division III coordinator of officials will look into the process and provide feedback. Committee Chair Brad Duckworth provided a summary of the NLI calculation process and assured the NFCA representatives that they will be included in all educational opportunities provided to the membership and that the support and assistance from the NFCA leadership would be appreciated.
 - g. **Division III governance and compliance updates.** Staff engaged the committee in a discussion about governance and compliance topics.
4. **Potential site presentations.** Per a request from the committee, potential hosts representatives from sites that have not hosted the final site provided brief presentations about their bids to host the 2027 and/or 2028 national championships and clarified the committee's questions regarding their facilities. The committee discussed all sites under consideration for 2027 and 2028 in preparation for making recommendations later this summer.

5. **2024 championship review.**

- a. **Site representative assignments and training.** Although the pool of site representatives was identified and ample communication took place prior to the selection of teams and hosts, there still needs to be additional training and a larger pool of potential site representatives geographically. With the implementation of the NPI system and the potential availability of RAC members having additional time to devote to the actual administration of the regional and super regional sites, the probability of expanding the pool of experienced site representatives looks promising. The committee confirmed its commitment to providing training opportunities for potential site representatives.
- b. **Selection call.** The committee noted that the new selection criteria, NPI, should be of great assistance during the selection process and will allow for greater transparency. The committee confirmed the prudence of moving the selection call to later in the day to allow for the RACs to meet on Sunday morning rather than Saturday night to ensure that all conference games played on Saturday were reported in the system. The committee noted that this first year with NPI could allow the selection process to move more quickly on Selection Sunday.
- c. **Preliminary rounds.** The committee noted the need to continue emphasizing and publicizing host expectations to ensure that hosts are following protocols and guidelines set by the committee. The committee noted the need to review the host manual to ensure that all updated requirements and expectations are clear. Members noted that the committee needs to determine the requested procedure and protocol for preliminary-round press conferences and expectations for web streaming. The regional, super regional and finals game times were discussed, and no decision was made to modify or change those times. The committee noted the need to clarify the rain date policy for the possibility of playing three games in one day, if necessary, on the rain date. The location and frequency of documenting this policy in the various manuals was discussed.
- d. **Day of rest.** The committee stressed the need for both baseball and softball to adhere to the day of rest policy, with the understanding that the day of rest may be used as a day to make up games when necessary. However, the committee believes in the value of the day of rest and wants both teams in the final series to be able to take advantage of the day.
- e. **Hotels.** Although most host locations were able to provide quality hotels with breakfast and conference rooms at their sites within the recommended 30-minute distance from the venue, it was reported that there were still host sites that were selected that were unable to meet that expectation. The committee recommended that host site hotels be specifically identified prior to awarding the bid and that sites that have had issues with hotels in the past be vetted more closely. Distance from hotel to venue continues to be an issue at certain locations, but in those cases, the quality of the properties was not in question, just the distance.

- f. **Signage.** The committee commended additions to the signage package at East Texas Baptist University and recommended continuing to have similar signage for future venues. The committee emphasized that teams should be notified in advance that they should not remove their team signage when departing the site; rather, the signage will be sent to them after the championship.
- g. **Banquet.** The committee reviewed the banquet and was pleased with the changes made and the presentation of the banquet. Members noted the changes to the NFCA slide show/award presentation were well received by participants and committee members recommended that this format be used in future banquets.
- h. **Community service and Special Olympics components.** The committee agreed that the elimination of the community service activity on the practice day was a good decision, given all that needs to be accomplished on the practice day and the distances and delays in travel that have been, and will continue to be experienced. Members would like to continue implementing the Special Olympic component but would like the host to be more specific on the timing and the nature of the event(s).
- i. **Event Direct usage.** The committee was pleased with the use of Event Direct for communication with coaches, administrators and host staff at the finals site. The committee recommended that the coordinator of officials on site at the championship be required to use the app to facilitate ease of communication with the officials.
- j. **Survey results.** Survey results were sent to the committee members but not in time for discussion on the call. That discussion will take place on the first committee call with the newly appointed championship manager.

6. 2025 championship.

- **2025 committee timeline.** The committee timeline will be created and distributed to the committee after the new championship manager and the new committee chair develop it.
- 7. **Committee roster.** The committee's current chair, Brad Duckworth, director of athletics at Wisconsin-Stevens Point, is rotating off the committee, and a new member has been selected to replace him. The new member's term will begin in August of 2025. The committee confirmed Jessica Hollen, senior woman administrator at Linfield University, to replace Mr. Duckworth as chair for the 2024-25 academic year. The committee also confirmed Casie Runksmeier, senior woman administrator at Colby College, as the vice chair for 2024-25.
 - 8. **Softball manuals review.** The committee will review the manuals for the 2024-25 and instruct staff on necessary revisions/updates.

- 10. Joint meeting with Division III Baseball Committee.** JP Williams, championship manager for Division III baseball, and the new softball championship manager will schedule the next joint meeting.
- 11. 2025 annual meeting.** The date, place and time for the 2025 annual meeting will be determined by the new championship manager and newly elected committee chair.

Committee Chair: Brad Duckworth, University of Wisconsin Stevens Point
Staff Liaison: JoAnn Nester, Contractor

NCAA Division III Softball Committee July 10, 2024, Annual Meeting	
Attendees	
Casie Runksmeier, Colby College.	
Donna Koczajowski, Coast Guard Academy.	
Courtney Wormuth, SUNY Courtland.	
Wes Landrum, Alvernia University.	
Terlynn (T.O) Olds, LaGrange College.	
Van Zanic, Geneva College.	
Brad Duckworth, University of Wisconsin- Stevens Point.	
Jaime Mueller, Wartburg College.	
Jessica Hollen, Linfield University.	
Terry Small, New Jersey Athletic Conference.	
Absentees:	
None.	
Guests in Attendance:	
Dee Abrahamson, NCAA Equipment Coordinator.	
Dave Hines, NFCA.	
Leslie Huntington, NFCA.	
Glenda Bates, Acting NCAA Division III Officials Coordinator.	
NCAA Staff Liaison in Attendance:	
JoAnn Nester, NCAA Contractor	
Other NCAA Staff Members in Attendance:	
Caleb Kolby, Laura Peterson Mlynski, Jeff Myers, Bill Regan and Markell Staton.	