



**REPORT OF THE  
NCAA DIVISION III SOFTBALL COMMITTEE  
JUNE 5, 2023, ANNUAL MEETING**

**KEY ITEMS.**

- 1. Super regional date change.** The committee requests moving the super regional round from a Friday/Saturday format to a Thursday/Friday format. (See Action Item 2-a.)
- 2. Seventh umpire at the finals site.** The committee requests adding a seventh umpire to the finals site crew. (See Action Item 2-b.)
- 3. Automatic qualification.** The committee requests that all eligible conferences receive automatic qualification for the 2024 championship. (See Action Item 2-c.)
- 4. Committee chair and vice chair.** The committee reelected the chair and elected a new vice chair for 2023-24. (See Informational Item 10.)

**ACTION ITEMS.**

**1. Legislative items.**

- None.

**2. Nonlegislative items.**

**a. Super regional date change.**

- (1) Recommendation. Change the super regional competition dates from Friday/Saturday to Thursday/Friday.
- (2) Effective date. September 1, 2023.
- (3) Rationale. The committee wishes to change to the super regional competition dates to Thursday and Friday rather than Friday and Saturday to provide more time for the eight advancing teams to prepare for the finals. The 2023 championship included two important date formula changes, which were requiring all regionals to use the Thursday-Saturday format and having the entire tournament pushed back a week, meaning that teams traveling from the super regionals to the finals site departed on Tuesday after Memorial Day. The 2023 date changes did not affect the current super regional dates, and the committee realized that the turnaround time from super regionals to the finals site was too condensed. Accordingly, the extra day would be appreciated by those teams traveling right after the holiday weekend. Since all regional rounds now end on Saturday, starting super regional competition on Thursday still provides sufficient time between rounds for equitable play and

competition.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. The committee is confident that the additional day to prepare for the finals site would benefit the student-athletes with better travel options and an additional day of rest before the finals site competition begins.

**b. Seventh umpire at finals site.**

(1) Recommendation. Add an umpire to the finals site to create a seven-person crew.

(2) Effective date. September 1, 2023.

(3) Rationale. A seventh umpire provides more flexibility for an equitable rotation over a seven-day, 17-game championship. This allows for more options in the rotation to help if there are issues with an umpire, such as injury or illness. It will also help create parity for teams that are playing more games at the finals site due to the double elimination format, to ensure one umpire has not seen one team too many times.

(4) Estimated budget impact. \$3,005 to include a set game fee, per diem, travel expenses, and hotel room for seven nights for the additional umpire.

(5) Student-athlete impact. The committee is confident that having the seventh umpire in the rotation will create for more equitable competition throughout the finals.

**c. Automatic qualification.**

(1) Recommendation. Approve the following 41 conferences for automatic qualification to the 2024 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, 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, Upper Midwest Athletic Conference, USA South Athletic Conference, Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference.

(2) Effective date. September 1, 2023.

(3) Rationale. Each conference meets the requirements of NCAA Bylaw 31.3.3 and has completed the automatic-qualification declaration form (note that pool allocations may be adjusted based on 2022-23 sponsorship numbers).

Anticipated pool allocations: Pool A – 41, Pool B – 1, Pool C – 20.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

#### INFORMATIONAL ITEMS.

1. **2022 annual meeting report.** The committee approved the 2022 annual meeting report as submitted.
2. **Automatic qualification, pool breakdowns and regional alignment.** The committee reviewed the regional alignments by conference. Staff noted conference membership changes and will be confirmed once the 2023-24 sponsorship information is available.
3. **Discussion with the national coordinator of officials, Division III regional advisor, secretary-rules editor, NCAA Softball Equipment Consultant, and NCAA Softball Video Services & Training Coordinator.** The committee met with Steve McCown, the national coordinator of officials; Glenda Bates, the SUP Regional Advisor for Division III, Vickie Van Kleeck, secretary-rules editor; Dee Abrahamson, softball equipment consultant, and Marty Abezetian, video services and training coordinator, to discuss the postseason assignment process, evaluation of umpires, proposal of a seventh umpire for the finals, the rule change proposals and new federated rules process, the bat testing program, and video replay stations from the 2023 championship.
  - a. **Officials' selection process.** The committee reviewed the process used for selecting and approving officials for the 2023 championship. Ms. Bates reviewed the proposed changes and enhancements to the process for 2024 to provide for more transparency, and accuracy in the recommendation process.
  - b. **Video review at the championship.** The committee reviewed the statistics provided by Mr. Abezetian and confirmed that video review at the championship is a needed investment for the championship.
  - c. **Rules Proposals.** Ms. Van Kleeck reviewed the rules proposals, and the committee will plan to meet with the rules committee in the coming weeks as part of the new federated rules process for Division III to provide feedback.
  - d. **Bat Testing.** The committee asked Ms. Abrahamson for statistics around bat testing and thanked her for her work on the program. The committee continues to note the differences

between softball and baseball in the bat testing program. The committee has concerns about everyday testing at the championship but supports the program as they continue to look at data year-over-year and make the best decision for the safety of the student-athletes.

- e. **Seventh umpire at finals site.** Ms. Bates reviewed her rationale of why adding a seventh umpire at the finals site is a good investment for the championship. The committee reviewed the information and supported the rationale as noted in Action Item 2-b.
- 4. **Championship date formula.** The committee discussed the current championship date formula and the changes that occurred at the 2023 championship, including all regional rounds being played Thursday-Saturday, and the entire championship being a week later than previous years. The committee will continue to monitor feedback from the Thursday-Saturday regional format with the tight turnaround from the selection show but was pleased with the consistency of date equity at regionals. The committee was also pleased with the timing of this year's tournament being pushed back an entire week to align with Division III baseball. The committee discussed the concerns on the quick turnaround from super regionals to the finals site and agreed to recommend changing the competition dates of super regionals to Thursday and Friday rather than Friday and Saturday, beginning at the 2024 Championship. (See Action Item 2-a.)
  - 5. **Two-team regional.** The committee noted the uniqueness of having 15 four-team regionals and one two-team regional. The committee noted its desire to have an equitable bracket with 16 four-team regionals but understands the sport sponsorship only permits a 62-team field. The committee will continue reviewing two-team regional policies and procedures to help ensure that the obvious differences do not compromise the integrity of the regionals.
  - 6. **2023 championship review.**
    - a. **Site representative recruitment and training.** The committee discussed the recruitment of site representatives for the 2023 championship and was pleased with the commitment from so many individuals in the membership. The committee wants to continue providing resources to site reps, and to clarify policies and procedures for execution on site.
    - b. **Selection criteria.** The committee reviewed the selection criteria and evaluated the consistency of it being applied throughout regional rankings, through selections and the reseeding process for super regionals and finals. The committee understands more transparency is a goal for the membership and will continue to ensure information is available for the membership. The committee also reviewed the Pairwise information and potential timeline of new selection criteria.
    - c. **Selection call.** The committee discussed the selection timeline for 2023. The committee was pleased with moving up the selection call to talk through the multiple bracket scenarios. The committee noted the need to move the selection call later in the day to ensure RACs can meet on Sunday morning rather than Saturday night with many conference games being played on Saturday. The committee noted the length of the call and discussed strategies to ensure the call can be completed on Sunday night in order to move the

selection call to 11 a.m. on Monday to assist with the tight turnaround.

- d. **Preliminary rounds.** The committee reviewed preliminary-round feedback and was pleased with the results. The committee noted the diligent planning from each host to ensure a championship experience at preliminary rounds. The committee noted the need to reemphasize host expectations, and to ensure hosts are following protocols and guidelines set forth by the committee.
- e. **Regional round game times and schedule.** The committee noted the need to move game times up on Thursday to assist with potential weather and facilities with no lights. The committee will plan to move game times up to noon and 2:30 on Thursday; 11 a.m., 1:30 p.m. and 4 p.m. on Friday; and 11 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. on Saturday. The committee will still work with host institutions on proposed changes to the game times. The committee also noted that the No. 1 seed should be playing in the first game of the regional and will make that operational change in 2024.
- f. **Dugout policy.** The committee was pleased with the dugout policy changes made in 2023. This included changing the host institution's regular-season home dugout as the home team dugout the entire weekend for regionals and super regionals. The committee discussed the policy for 2024 and is recommending the change that the host institution will always be in the home dugout for the entire regional/super regional even if they are the away team for a particular game. This aligns with other divisional policies.
- g. **Doubleheader policy.** The committee was pleased with the change in the doubleheader policy for 2023 that required teams to stay in the same dugout if they are playing a doubleheader against the same team. The home/away designation may switch, but teams were to stay in the same dugout. The committee affirmed the policy that a team may need to switch dugouts if they are playing a different team in a back-back game on the second day of competition at regionals.
- h. **Double-flip policy.** The committee was pleased with the removal of the double-flip policy and affirmed the new policy of the higher seed calling the coinflip. This provides easy direction and policy enforcement for site reps, hosts and participating teams.
- i. **Day of rest.** The committee was pleased to add a day of rest to the finals site and believes continuing to do so will add value to the experience at future championships. The committee noted the unique situation of one team having to play on the day of rest but through diligent planning was prepared for the situation and communicated it in the policies and procedures prior to the tournament. The committee's hope is to see a day of rest for both teams in 2024.
- j. **Student-athletes in uniform.** The committee was pleased with allowing all traveling student-athletes within the dugout (32) to be in uniform during the championship. The committee noted the desire to not have a dugout limit since there is a roster card that is completed before each game. Additionally, the committee was pleased to provide all student-athletes participating in the championship with an NCAA patch. The committee also affirmed the policy that each team can switch out who is on their roster card between each game.

- k. **Signage.** The committee was pleased with the enhanced signage provided at the championship and thought it added to the championship experience. The committee was pleased with the “ticket punched” sign, enlarged brackets, and lighting piece throughout the championship.
- l. **Hotels.** The committee was pleased with the team hotels for the finals. The committee noted the unpredictability of having three team hotels but was pleased with the additional space each team was afforded by the decision.
- m. **Broadcasting/streaming.** The committee was pleased with the broadcasting of the national championship and was pleased that all preliminary-round hosts streamed the games.
- n. **Banquet.** The committee reviewed the banquet and supported continuing the event moving forward.
- o. **Community service.** The committee appreciated the community service project that the hosts put together but elected to discontinue the opportunity in 2024 due to the tremendously busy practice and banquet schedule on the day community service has typically occurred. The committee will evaluate this annually and will be open to host feedback on ideas/timing but wants to ensure the activity is the best possible for the student-athletes.
- p. **All-tournament team.** The committee was pleased with the composition of the all-tournament team at the finals site and will continue with this approach in 2024.
- q. **Game times.** The committee will review the finals site game schedule and times to ensure it is the best experience for the student-athletes.
- r. **EventDirect Use.** The committee was pleased with the exclusive use of Event Direct as the main communication tool used with teams/coaches. The single form of communication was streamlined and equitable for all teams involved.
- s. **Survey review.** The committee reviewed the survey results and discussed them throughout the various sections of the agenda.

## 7. 2024 championship.

- a. **2024 committee timeline.** The committee affirmed the timeline for 2023 worked well and will hope to use a similar timeline in 2024.
- b. **Moyer Complex renovation plans.** The committee reviewed the timeline and diagrams of the renovation plans for the 2024 championship host and were pleased with the many upgrades that will be experienced at the championship. (Note: Subsequent to the meeting, the committee was informed by the City of Salem that the renovations would not be completed in time to host the 2024 championship. As such, the committee convened to submit a replacement host recommendation for the Division III Championships

Committee to consider.)

- c. **Banquet space.** The committee emphasized the need for a unique banquet spot with future hosts and directed NCAA staff to work on options for 2024 and beyond.
  - d. **Practice.** The committee confirmed the process for selecting practice times worked well for 2023 and will plan to use this method for 2024.
8. **Budget cycle.** The committee noted the upcoming Division III budget cycle with requests due in early 2024. The committee reviewed the budget priority survey results as well.
  9. **Committee roster.** The committee noted the expiring term of one member. The committee is pleased with the current makeup of term expirations to help maintain an experienced base from year to year.
  10. **Committee chair.** The committee confirmed that Brad Duckworth, director of athletics at Wisconsin Stevens-Point, will continue to serve as the chair for 2023-24. The committee also elected Jessica Hollen, head softball coach at George Fox University, as the vice chair for 2023-24.
  11. **Division III update.** Staff provided legislative updates from the NCAA Convention and recent Division III Management Council meetings. Updates included the revised Division III philosophy statement, federated playing rules, eligibility center updates, waiver request issues, and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Division III.
  12. **Joint meeting with Division III Baseball Committee.** The committee will meet jointly with the baseball committee to review each championship and upcoming action items in August.
  13. **Softball manuals review.** The committee reviewed the various manuals and instructed staff to make the appropriate updates.
  14. **NFCA feedback.** The committee met with designated members from the National Fastpitch Coaches Association to receive feedback they have gathered from the participating coaches in the postseason. The committee reviewed the feedback and will utilize that feedback for future planning.
  15. **2024 annual meeting.** The committee supported having the annual meeting on site in conjunction with the championship but will continue to decide on a yearly basis the best time and place for the annual meeting.

*Committee Chair: Brad Duckworth, University of Wisconsin Stevens-Point, Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference*

*Staff Liaison(s): Caleb Kolby, Championships and Alliances; Markell Staton, Championships and Alliances*

Report of the NCAA Division III Softball Committee

Annual Meeting

June 5, 2023

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NCAA Division III Softball Committee June 5, 2023, Annual Meeting	
<b>Attendees:</b>	
Casie Runksmeier, Colby College.	
Donna Koczajowski, Coast Guard Academy.	
Courtney Wormuth, SUNY Cortland.	
Rachel Turoscy, DeSales University.	
Wes Landrum, Alvernia University.	
Terlynn (T.O.) Olds, LaGrange College.	
Van Zanic, Geneva College.	
Brad Duckworth, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point.	
Rilee Dawson, College of St. Scholastica.	
Jessica Hollen, George Fox University.	
<b>Absentees:</b>	
None.	
<b>Guests in Attendance:</b>	
Dee Abrahamson, NCAA Softball Equipment Consultant.	
Vickie Van Kleeck, NCAA Softball Secretary-Rules Editor.	
Glenda Bates, NCAA Softball, Division III Regional Advisor of Umpires.	
Steve McCown, National Coordinator of Officials.	
Marty Abezetian, NCAA Softball Video Services and Training Coordinator.	
Dave Hines, National Collegiate Fastpitch Association, Director of Publications.	
Leslie Huntington, National Collegiate Fastpitch Association, Division III Coach Representative.	
<b>NCAA Staff Liaison in Attendance:</b>	
Caleb Kolby, Markell Staton.	
<b>Other NCAA Staff Members in Attendance:</b>	
Jeff Meyers, Bill Regan, Laura Peterson-Mlynski.	