



NCAA Division I Competition Oversight Committee Tennis Championship Pilot (Updated Nov. 8, 2024)

Background.

The NCAA Division I Competition Oversight Committee has approved a two-year pilot for the 2024-25 and 2025-26 academic years to hold the Division I tennis individual championships in the fall and the team championships in the spring. NCAA academic and membership affairs and championships staff have received several questions regarding the impact of the pilot program on current legislation. The Competition Oversight Committee has provided the following guidance on the application of the pilot to current NCAA legislation.

FAQ.

Questions Related to Playing and Practice Season Legislation.

- **Length of Playing Season:** Does the pilot program require a review of the length of playing season in tennis (144 day consisting of two segments)? Will the timing of the championship result in teams adjusting their fall schedule compared to previous years and does this adjustment require the playing season to be extended?

A: No, the pilot does not require a review of the length of the playing season in tennis. The pilot was designed to fit within the current playing and practice season for tennis without adjustment to the 144 days consisting of two segments. In fact, the ITA (coaches association) agreed to not request any legislative changes to the playing and practice season.

- When do tennis programs traditionally start their fall segment (e.g., late August, early/mid September)? Currently, does the start of the fall segment differ significantly for semester vs. quarter institutions? How does the pilot program affect those differences?

A: Per Bylaw 17.24.2, tennis programs may begin practice on Sept. 7 or the first day of classes, whichever is earlier. The first qualifying pathway event is at the end of September – the ITA All-American Championships. This event has traditionally taken place at this time with participation from quarter schools and semester schools. A tennis program does not need to start earlier than the current bylaw in light of the pilot.

- Currently, in team sports, practice between the last regular season contest (or conference championship) and NCAA championship does not count towards the playing season if a team has reason to believe they may be selected to the NCAA championship. In individual sports, only appropriate squad members considered necessary for effective practice (e.g., necessary playing partners) may practice prior to the NCAA championship. During the pilot program, specifically during the fall segment, how should practice in preparation for the NCAA championship count (or be excluded from counting) towards the playing season.

A: All who qualified via one of the pathways should continue to practice with any necessary practice partners exempt from the countable days until the fall singles and doubles championships. The last qualifier ends on Nov. 10, 2024. All qualifiers will be determined Nov. 10, 2024, and the committee will announce the alternate list on Nov. 11. At that point, those announced participants, alternates and their necessary practice partners can practice before the fall singles and doubles championships (Nov. 19-24) exempt from countable days.

- Currently, the playing season must end following the conclusion of the NCAA championship (17.24.4). Under the pilot program should this legislation be interpreted to mean the conclusion of the team championship?

A: Yes.

- For autonomy institutions (and institutions that opt into autonomy legislation), following the NCAA championship student-athletes must be provided with seven consecutive days off? Under the pilot program are student-athletes required to receive seven days off after both the individual and team championships?

A: No. As noted above under the pilot program the playing season must end following the conclusion of the NCAA championship (17.24.4), which has been interpreted to mean the conclusion of the team championship.

- **Conference Championships:** Current legislation only permits an institution to exclude one conference championship from the maximum dates of competition (25). During the pilot program should an institution be permitted to exclude an individual and team conference championship?

A: Only a team championship. There is no individual automatic qualification into the fall singles and doubles championships. The ITA Conference Masters event is a qualifying pathway event where all team championship AQ-eligible conferences can send a representative to participate for a chance to qualify to the NCAA singles and doubles championships. A conference has the discretion to determine how their representative is determined. It is not required to hold a conference championship to determine the conference representatives.

- Currently, conference championships must be included as part of the playing season. Should conference individual and team championships, if permitted, count toward the playing season?

A: Yes.

- **Postseason Event Participation:** The Competition Oversight Committee previously reviewed a blanket waiver request to allow tennis student-athletes to compete in one individual and one team postseason event. During the pilot program how many “postseason” events may a student-athlete participate in? Can a student-athlete only participate in individual postseason events in the fall and team postseason events in the spring? Could a student-athlete who does not qualify for the NCAA individual championship participate in an individual and team postseason event in the spring?

A: During the two years of the pilot, a student-athlete can participate in one postseason season-ending event as an individual in the fall and one postseason season-ending event as a team member in the spring. Currently, there are no individual NIT events. However, the intent of the blanket waiver is to permit a student-athlete, who may qualify for the NCAA singles and doubles championships in the fall but does not qualify for the NCAA team tournament in the spring, the opportunity to participate with their team in a spring team NIT event. Currently, a student-athlete in that situation cannot participate in both the NCAA singles and doubles championships in the spring AND a postseason NIT event if their team does not qualify for the NCAA team tournament.

- How is the current awards legislation (Bylaw 16) intended to be applied during the pilot?

FIGURE 16-2 Championship Awards				
Type of Award	Maximum Value of Award	Number of Times Award May Be Received	Permissible Awarding Agencies	Maximum Number of Permissible Awarding Agencies
National Championship conducted by NCAA	\$415*	Once per championship	Institution** Conference**	2
National Championship not conducted by NCAA***	\$415*	Once per championship	Institution** Conference**	2
Conference Championship — regular season	\$325*#	Once per championship	Institution** Conference**	2
Conference Championship — postseason contest or tournament	\$325*#	Once per championship	Institution** Conference**	2
<p>* Each permissible awarding agency is subject to a separate \$415/\$325 limit per award.</p> <p>** Award may be provided by another organization recognized by the institution or conference to act in its place.</p> <p>*** Applies only to sports or classification divisions in which the NCAA does not conduct championships. Teams must be designated as a “national champion” by a national wire-service poll or the national coaches association in that sport. # The combined value of both awards shall not exceed \$325 if same institution wins conference regular-season and postseason championships.</p>				

A: There should be no change. The pilot simply moves the singles and doubles championships to the fall from the spring. The team championships, singles championships, and doubles championships are separate national championship tournaments. A student-athlete who wins all three tournaments would get the maximum award value three times as noted, once per championship. Should a conference host an individual conference championship in the fall during the pilot in addition to the team conference championship in the spring, awards may be given once per championship.

Issues Related to Student-Athlete Reinstatement.

- Reinstatement Withholding Conditions:** Currently, tennis is classified as an “individual sport with a separate team championship” for purposes of determining which dates of competition to use when fulfilling a reinstatement withholding condition. Specifically, for withholding purposes, the dates of competition must be among those considered for team selection to the NCAA championship. During the pilot program does this policy need to be amended to also consider dates of competition used to qualify for the individual championship?

A: No, the policy does not need to be amended to also consider dates of competition used to qualify for the individual championship. The only change is that the singles and doubles championship is

moving from the spring to the fall. There is no change to the playing and practice seasons and no change to the dates for qualifying to the team tournament, which remains January 1 until the appointed end of the regular season selection deadline.

- During the pilot program will the fall and spring segments be considered two separately declared seasons?

A: No, during the pilot program, the fall and spring segments are not to be considered two separately declared seasons.

- **Hardship and Season of Competition Waivers:** Current hardship and season of competition waiver legislation focuses on the “playing season that concludes with the NCAA championship” when determining the first date of competition in the second half of the season and considers participation in a conference championship or other postseason competition as a meaningful participation opportunity (i.e., conference championships and other postseason competition are the only Bylaw 17 exemptions that count when identifying the first half of the season and the student-athlete’s participation count for purposes of waiver eligibility).

- During the pilot program, how should participation in the individual championship be viewed when processing hardship and season-of-competition waivers? Should it be treated like any other first half date of competition or is there greater weight to the experience/participation opportunity given it is championship play? Should a waiver for a student-athlete who did not compete in the individual championship be viewed any differently than one for a student-athlete who did play in the individual championship, all other data being equal?

A: The pilot program should not impact how this is currently evaluated. The singles and doubles championships taking place in the fall instead of the spring should have no bearing on this evaluation and it should be treated as any other first half date of competition.

- Traditionally, mid-year enrollees have limited access to hardship and season of competition waivers given the proximity of their enrollment to the start of the second half of the season. How will mid-year enrollment be viewed in terms of a participation opportunity and waiver access given the individual championship will have already taken place?

A: The pilot program should not impact how this is currently evaluated. The singles and doubles championships taking place in the fall instead of the spring should have no bearing on the evaluation of mid-year enrollment in comparison to how it is currently evaluated.

- Current hardship and season of competition waiver legislation for indoor and outdoor track and field requires a more complex analysis than all other sports given the two sports share a bylaw 17 maximum competition limitation but offer separate waiver opportunities given they are classified as different sports and have distinct championships. If it is determined that two waiver opportunities should be provided

during the pilot program, should there be separate maximum competition limitations for the individual and team seasons to avoid the complexities currently found with track and field in the hardship and season of competition waiver space? *A: Fall individual tennis and spring team tennis should not be considered like indoor and outdoor track and field. The intent of the pilot is not to lead down this path. The intent of the pilot is to better define what already existed with the fall segment consisting of individual competition and preparation for the spring team competition segment each culminating in a championship (championships that already existed). The current processes for evaluating hardship and season of competition waivers should continue during the pilot as they have previously.*

More Questions.

Additional questions from the membership on this topic should be submitted to the NCAA staff through RSRO.