

## NCAA Opening Round Structure

**Purpose:** To provide access for all eligible teams. Conference automatic qualifiers (AQ) and at-large teams (at least 50% of the bracket).

**Qualification:** Opening rounds are created when the number of eligible AQs is greater than 50% of the bracket. (e.g. 5 AQs in a 4-team bracket)

**Principles:**

- Opening round teams and match-ups shall be determined during the committee selection process
- Opening round(s) are contested between the lowest ranked AQ teams (regardless of conference RPI).
  - **Exception:** *Per bylaw 31.3.4.7.1, ‘...in sports other than men’s volleyball, men’s water polo and women’s water polo, the remaining 50 percent of the championship field shall be reserved for at-large teams.’*
  - Therefore, in the championships listed above AQ and or at-large teams may participate in the opening round games.
- Opening round competition must be completed before the first scheduled round of the championship begins.
- Match-ups
  - ❖ Opening round match-ups will be determined by geographic proximity.
  - ❖ Higher seeded team will host provided they meet geographic and hosting requirements.
- Opening rounds will be treated equal to preliminary rounds.
  - ❖ The NCAA will pay travel and per diem expenses for teams competing in the opening round(s).
  - ❖ All statistics will be included in the championship statistics and records.
  - ❖ Teams will be included in the championship program and on championship merchandise.
  - ❖ Non-advancing participants will receive participant medallions.
  - ❖ The NCAA will provide a basic signage package to each site.
- Opening rounds shall be scheduled at least two days prior to the subsequent round if at the championship site. There must be at least one-day rest/travel prior to the practice day of the subsequent round.
  - ❖ The opening round(s) shall be scheduled at least three days prior to the subsequent round if it is not at the championship site.

- Bracket assignments for teams advancing out of the opening rounds
  - ❖ Placement in the bracket will be at the discretion of the sport committee; however, the committee must adhere to the following principles:
    - If the championship has preliminary rounds,
      - The advancing team(s) shall be placed in the bracket per geographic proximity which creates the least number of flights.
    - If the championship does not have preliminary rounds,
      - The advancing team(s) will be placed in the bracket on the appropriate seed line.
- Hosting
  - ❖ If the two teams in the opening round are within geographic proximity of each other but not within geographic proximity of the championship site:
    - The sports committee will determine the opening round host according to selection criteria and hosting requirements.
  - ❖ If the two teams are within geographic proximity of the championship site, the following may be designated as the opening round site:
    - The committee may elect to conduct the opening round on campus of one of the participating teams.
    - The committee may elect to conduct the opening round at the championship site (provided the championship site is available).
    - If the opening round is held at the championship site, the non-advancing team(s) shall return home immediately following the opening round round.

*Note: The intent is to have the opening round games hosted on campus of one of the participating teams; however, due to geographic proximity and missed class time host sites may be determined at the committee's discretion.*