



**REPORT OF THE
NCAA DIVISION III CHAMPIONSHIPS COMMITTEE
JUNE 17-18, 2024, VIDEOCONFERENCE**

ACTION ITEMS.

1. Legislative items.

a. Pairings and site selection – waiver.

(1) Recommendation. That Bylaw 31.3.5.1 (b) be waived for up to two years to allow flexibility to ensure top-seeded teams (the number of which to be defined by sport committees and approved by the Championships Committee) don't compete against each other in the early rounds of championships.

(2) Effective date. September 1, 2024.

(3) Rationale. The Championships Committee is requesting a waiver of Bylaw 31.3.5.1 (b) that requires geographic proximity (i.e., the competition site is within 500 miles of the institution) to take precedent over seeding when constructing a championship bracket. The committee discussed several possible methods to provide sport committees with greater flexibility when building their brackets that would allow top-seeded teams to be protected in the preliminary rounds.

The committee is requesting a waiver for up to two years to allow time for the impact of the change to be implemented and assessed. While the committee realizes that one approach will not resolve every nuanced bracketing issue for each sport, it is a necessary next step that can be evaluated and adjusted, if necessary. If approved, the committee will continue developing policies to guide sport committees so that the principles are applied consistently from sport to sport.

(4) Estimated budget impact. Based on prior championships initiatives (i.e., teams from the same conference shall not play one another in the first round), staff anticipates the annual budget to be \$250,000 annually.

(5) Student-athlete impact. Student-athletes on top-seeded teams will be afforded the opportunity to be protected from facing other top-seeded teams in the early rounds of the championships.

b. Pairings and site selection.

(1) Recommendation. That Bylaw 31.3.5.1 (pairings and site selection) be amended as follows:

- (b) Once selected, teams shall be grouped in clusters according to natural geographic proximity. Teams shall then be paired according to geographic proximity. A team may be moved to numerically balance the bracket if geographic proximity is maintained. Teams shall be paired and eligible according to geographic proximity (within 500 miles). An exception may be granted when there are not enough teams within the 500-mile radius to fill the region;
- (c) Teams may be seeded on a regional basis using the regional-selection criteria. However, geographic proximity shall take precedence over seeding;
- (d) Teams from the same conference shall not play one another in the first round ~~as long as geographic proximity is maintained~~; and
- (e) ~~The highest-seeded team that meets all selection criteria shall be selected as the host institution, provided geographic proximity is maintained. Seeding may be a consideration when selecting hosts but is not determinative.~~

(2) Effective date. September 1, 2024.

(3) Rationale. The committee believes that eliminating the reference to geographic proximity in Bylaw 31.3.5.1 (c) aligns the legislation with the current understanding that conference opponents will not meet in the first round of any championship despite geographic proximity.

The second change amends Bylaw 31.3.5.1 (d) that indicates the highest-seeded team that meets all selection criteria will be selected as the host institution provided that geographic proximity is maintained. The committee is recommending that the legislation reflect that seeding may be considered when selecting hosts but that it would not be solely determinative as there are more factors that should be considered when selecting hosts. Some of those factors are: 1) quality and availability of the facility and other necessary accommodations; 2) geographical location including rotation of sites, weather conditions, accessibility, and transportation costs; 3) attendance history and revenue potential, which shall be considered to assure fiscal responsibility; 4) student-athlete experience; and 5) history of hosting success (not limited to the sport at hand).

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. These changes will enhance the student-athlete experience as it continues to separate conferences from being paired in the first round. It also emphasizes a host's demonstrated ability to provide a quality, well-rounded student-athlete experience.

c. Noncontroversial Legislation – Bylaw 17.14.2.1 – Playing and Practice Seasons – Ice Hockey – Preseason Practice – Exception – Off-Ice Training.

(1) Recommendation. That the Division III Management Council adopt noncontroversial legislation to eliminate Bylaw 17.14.2.1 (off-ice training exception for ice hockey preseason practice).

(2) Effective date. September 2024.

(3) Rationale. The Men’s and Women’s Ice Hockey Committees discussed the difficulty and confusion ice hockey programs were experiencing with Bylaw 17.14.2.1 and the inconsistency it has caused in training. Both committee chairs shared that there was positive feedback regarding the elimination of the bylaw from coaches present at the American College Hockey Coaches Association Convention in May. The committees believed that eliminating the bylaw would create consistency in training for all ice hockey programs, and that the support from the coaching community warrants the action being considered as noncontroversial. With the additional flexibility from the updated playing and practice season legislation, specifically the ability to use eight days of practice before the start of the preseason, this language has become cumbersome and no longer aligns with how programs are working up to the start of their ice hockey season. By eliminating the off-ice practice language, institutions would still have their eight flex days to use as they desire leading up to the official start of on-ice practice on the second Monday of October. This will allow programs opting to use their flex days before the start of the season to remain on the ice as they shift into the preseason start date, creating consistent training for the student-athletes. Importantly, this proposal does not aim to change the acclimatization process. Bylaw 17.14.3.1 will remain as written and will not begin until the preseason officially begins on the ice on the second Monday of October.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. By eliminating the off-ice practice language, institutions would still have their eight flex days to use as they desire leading up to the official start of on-ice practice on the second Monday of October. This will allow programs opting to use their flex days before the start of the season to remain on the ice as they shift into the preseason start date, creating consistent training for the student-athletes.

2. Nonlegislative items.

• Minimum hosting requirements – web streaming.

a. Recommendation. That \$456,000 per year be allocated to reimburse preliminary-round hosts \$1,000 per hosting day to offset costs associated with web streaming.

- b. Effective date. September 1, 2024.
- c. Rationale. As the division considers expanding video streaming to include preliminary rounds, it is imperative that all hosts provide a live stream. To effectively brand the division and the sport-specific championship, there needs to be continuity in access and minimum production expectations of the live stream. A recent survey of the membership, completed by more than 300 Division III members, indicated that all are web streaming their conference contests as well as NCAA championships. Seventy percent of survey respondents indicated that they use one camera, 64% indicated they have the ability to include PSAs, 83% indicated that they can put a scorebug and graphics on the broadcast, and 73% have the ability to use multiple announcers.

The committee is recommending this host reimbursement for both FY25 and FY26.

- d. Budget impact. \$456,000 per year.
- e. Student-athlete impact. Providing dollars to help off-set real costs for preliminary round host institutions will allow each championship match to be more accessible for all fans of a particular sport and will increase the exposure of Division III athletics.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS.

1. **Welcome and announcements.** Division III Championships Committee Chair Karen Tessmer welcomed the group and previewed the agenda and meeting schedule.
2. **Recent Championships Committee reports.** The committee approved the report from its May 14 videoconference as presented.
3. **Division III Management Council update.** Holly Sheilley provided an update from the council's April meeting. Topics of note were an update on the athletic trainer working group and key highlights from the NCAA President's report.
4. **Division III Student-Athlete Advisory Committee update.** Adaobi Nebuwa provided an update from the SAAC's April meeting, noting the committee's discussion on the transfer legislation, the success of DIII Week, and the continued progress of the SAAC working groups.
5. **Budget update.** The committee reviewed the budget-to-actuals from 2023-24 through June 10, noting that not all expenses for the winter and spring championships have been recorded. Staff reminded the committee that the planned per diem overage due to implementing for the 2023-24 championships season is tracking as expected and accounts for the overage in that line item.
6. **Championships.**

- a. **Championships update.** Lynda Tealer, NCAA senior vice president of championships, joined the committee to introduce herself for the first time since joining the national office. Ms. Tealer is excited to be working with the national office staff and was able to attend the Division III Men's and Women's Outdoor Track and Field Championships in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, and the Division III Men's Lacrosse Championship in Philadelphia.
- b. **FY25-26 championships budget enhancements.** The committee reviewed the budget enhancements approved during its March meeting as a reminder of where the new dollars are being allocated in the upcoming budget cycle. The committee asked a few clarifying questions on the individual-team championships access ratio adjustment and noted that staff should continue to evaluate those championships' access moving forward.
- c. **NCAA Power Index.** The committee reviewed progress on the NPI education timeline, updates to the policies as discussed in May and the FAQ and guideline documents. The committee discussed the details of how information concerning NPI will be displayed on NCAA.com and its level of transparency, noting that the data should be as transparent as possible. The committee also discussed nuances the membership may experience moving forward with the NPI system, specifically that education will need to include pairing and preliminary-round host site selection details as an institution's NPI rank does not automatically indicate it has earned the right to host. The committee also discussed the timing of the educational webinars with coaches that will be taking place in the coming weeks and stressed their importance in the success of launching the NPI.
- d. **Bracketing principles.** The committee discussed at length the current Division III pairings and site selection legislation and the limits it puts on sport committees when bracketing. The committee has received membership feedback through surveys and other forums highlighting the fact that some areas of the country are impacted more than others by the current bracketing principles that prioritize maintaining geographic proximity. Challenges can also be magnified in smaller-sponsored sports with smaller brackets and fewer opportunities to separate top-seeded teams due to fewer preliminary rounds. The committee discussed several possible methods to provide sport committees with greater flexibility when building their brackets that would allow top-seeded teams to be protected in the preliminary rounds.

The second major component of bracketing is determining preliminary-round hosts. Currently the highest-seeded team that meets all selection criteria shall be selected to host as long as geographic proximity is maintained. The committee discussed the impact that hosting has on an institution and the student-athlete experience and believes it is a critical factor but ultimately determined that protecting top-seeded teams through prioritizing who they play is greatest.

The committee also discussed the portion of the bylaw that speaks to separating conference opponents in the first round and is recommending that the reference to geographic

proximity be eliminated as the division is committed to maintaining conference separation in the first round.

The committee is recommending changes to Bylaw 31.3.5.1 to reflect the tenets of maintaining conference separation in the first round and considering seeding when selecting hosts, but not guaranteeing top-seeded teams the right to host. (See Action Item 1-b.) The committee will also request a waiver of 31.3.5.1 (b) to allow flexibility in bracketing to protect top-seeded teams. (See Action Item 1-a.) If approved, the committee will continue developing policies to guide sport committees so that the principles are applied consistently from sport to sport.

The committee also noted that the division's shift to NPI as its team sport selection metric will lend itself well to identifying top-seeded teams. NPI will eliminate the need for sport committees to invest so much time selecting the at-large teams, allowing that time to be reallocated to developing brackets according to these new concepts.

- e. **Emerging sports – women's flag football.** Mikaela Topper provided an update on the growth of women's flag football and the projected path for it to be adopted as an emerging sport and growth into an NCAA-sanctioned championship.
- f. **Minimum hosting requirements – web streaming.** The committee approved a proposal starting with 2024-25 championships to include video streaming as a facility requirement in minimum bid specifications for prospective regional hosts and for preliminary-round contests in select team sports. The committee reviewed data from a membership survey that indicated most institutions are already web streaming preliminary-round contests and updating the requirements to include web streaming would not be an insurmountable task. The committee will recommend that the Division III Strategic Planning and Finance Committee support its request to allocate \$456,000 per year over the next two years (2024-25 and 2025-26) to off-set the costs associated with purchasing necessary equipment, hiring talent, or other costs associated with webstreaming NCAA championships. (See non-legislative action item.)

The committee did discuss the impact on institutional contracts already in place for the 2024-25 academic year with sponsoring agencies that appear on the institution's web stream during the regular season. Staff clarified with NCAA broadcast staff that an institution may purchase the rights to a web stream, which would permit those ads to be present on the web stream; however, the cost nearly exceeds the stipend being recommended. This policy is being revisited in the upcoming weeks and this concern will be relayed via the appropriate channels.

7. Academic and membership affairs.

- a. **America Southwest Conference – reclassifying member.** The committee conditionally approved the ASC's request for the University of Texas at Dallas to continue to be counted

as a Division III opponent for the 2024-25 academic year even if they are accepted into the Division II provisional process. The committee noted that Texas-Dallas has applied to start the Division II reclassification process and has also applied to be a part of Division II's new expedited membership process. If accepted into the expedited process, it would not be possible for Texas-Dallas to maintain the Division III financial aid model that does not permit athletics financial aid to be awarded. The committee agreed that Texas-Dallas would be considered a Division III opponent for in-region requirements. The committee further agreed that Texas-Dallas would be considered a Division III opponent for championship selection criteria only if they followed Division III regulations, including financial aid requirements.

- b. Little East Conference – women's ice hockey.** The committee denied the Little East Conference's request to waive the two-year waiting period required to earn an automatic berth to the women's ice hockey championship effective with the 2025-26 academic year. Little East Conference members sponsoring women's ice hockey have competed in the New England Hockey Conference – a single-sport women's ice hockey conference – and will continue in the NEHC as a member through 2024-25. Effective in 2025-26 the LEC will begin sponsoring women's ice hockey under its multi-sport conference umbrella with five core members and two affiliate members. While the committee realizes that most of the current NEHC members will move together to play under the Little East, the transition does not satisfy the waiver directive that would allow for it retain the NEHC AQ. Accordingly, the committee supported upholding the AQ legislation.
- c. University of California, Santa Cruz – women's basketball.** The committee took no action on the request from the University of California, Santa Cruz to waive the 70% in-region competition minimum to be eligible for championships. The committee noted that UC Santa Cruz's current schedule is at 69.57% in region and that traditional rounding principles should apply, thus eliminating the need for a waiver.
- 8. Championships access policy consideration.** The committee supported the Division III Membership Committee's request to amend the Division III championships selection criteria to allow provisional and reclassifying institutions to count toward Division III championships criteria for their opponents beginning in the academic year following the institution's attestation of full compliance with Division III bylaws. This includes the institution attesting that no student participating in athletics has been awarded athletically related financial aid and their policies and procedures for administering the student financial aid program comply with Bylaw 15.
- 9. Sport committee reports.**

 - a. Men's and women's ice hockey.** The committee supported the Men's and Women's Ice Hockey Committees' proposal that recommends eliminating the off-ice training exception for ice hockey preseason practice. The committee discussed the proposal and clarified that

this would not change the required acclimatization period and will simplify preseason for the membership. (See Action Item 1-c.)

- b. Women's ice hockey.** The committee tabled the Women's Ice Hockey Committee's request to adopt a bracketing exception that would allow the Men's and Women's Ice Hockey Committees to pair teams outside of the 500-mile travel radius (i.e., create a flight) when the bracketing principles would otherwise require two teams to face one another for a third consecutive year in the tournament. A similar bracketing exemption was approved in 2019-20 for ice hockey but is no longer relevant as sport sponsorship and the bracket have increased. The committee will review this request again after the Division III Strategic Planning and Finance Committee and the councils have had the opportunity to weigh in on the proposed divisional bracketing concepts to determine if the overarching policy would resolve this issue or if an ice hockey-specific exemption is still needed.
- c. Men's soccer.** The committee reviewed the men's soccer annual meeting report as information.
- d. Women's soccer.** The committee reviewed the women's soccer annual meeting report as information.
- e. Men's and women's soccer.** The committee received an update from the men's and women's soccer liaisons on the ongoing committee work to survey the membership on a potential championships date formula adjustment to move the men's and women's soccer championships one week later than the current formula. Staff also updated the Championships Committee on a concept being considered to change the permissible contests allowable in the nontraditional season. The soccer committees are in the process of receiving feedback from the Sport Science Institute in addition to membership feedback regarding the potential change to the championship date formula. and will share that once it is analyzed.
- f. Women's volleyball.** The committee reviewed the women's volleyball report as information.
- g. Wrestling.**

 - (1) Regional alignment waiver.** The committee approved the Wrestling Committee's request to waive Bylaw 31.3.4.3 that requires all members of a conference to be placed in the same sport evaluation region. The Championships Committee understands that wrestling regionals do not operate the same as team sport regions in how teams are currently evaluated for selection. This waiver will allow the Wrestling Committee to place teams more evenly and efficiently to optimize their efficiency.
 - (2) Regional alignment.** The committee approved the wrestling regional alignment as presented in the attachment. The change in regional alignment is due in part to

increasing sport sponsorship but also the recent field size increase that resulted in the addition of a seventh qualifying regional.

10. Governance update.

- a. Federated playing rules resource.** Staff provided a federated playing rules update, noting that the process continues to be evaluated. The selected sport committee and Division III members of the rules committee received a questionnaire to provide feedback on the process. Those individuals will also be interviewed to gain insight into the process, how it has worked, and how it can be improved. The committee asked several questions on potential modifications to the rules that should be common and those that can be federated.

The committee also discussed NCAA playing rules for sports that do not have an NCAA rules committee and the process for bringing those playing rules under the NCAA umbrella.

- b. Executive summary – Deloitte summary.** Louise McCleary reviewed the Deloitte summary with the committee, highlighting key takeaways and the next steps for implementation. Staff will continue to update the Championships Committee as it uses these findings to strategically advance the division.

11. Playing Rules Oversight Panel update. Chad Eisle, Championships Committee liaison to PROP, provided an update from the most recent PROP meetings highlighting key discussion topics from the February and April reports.

12. Sport and sport rules committee nominations. The committee approved the following sport and playing rules committee recommendations from the Division III Nominating Committee, effective as noted.

- a. NCAA National Collegiate Men’s Water Polo Committee.** Greg Lonzo, head men’s water polo coach, Claremont-McKenna-Harvey Mudd-Scripps Colleges, Southern California Intercollegiate Athletic Conference.
- b. NCAA Men’s Basketball Rules Committee.** Tim Fusina, director of athletics and head basketball coach, Waynesburg University, Presidents’ Athletic Conference.
- c. NCAA Men’s and Women’s Ice Hockey Rules Committee.** Whitney Colbert, head women’s ice hockey coach, Hamline University, Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference; and Eric Strand, head women’s ice hockey coach, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference.

13. September discussion topics with sport committee chairs. The committee provided feedback on possible discussion topics for its September meeting with each sport committee

chair. Possible topics include: 1) regional advisory committee's role within the NPI structure and how RAC members can be educated as site representatives for preliminary-round competition; 2) championships bench sizes; 3) selection show and 4) NCAA.com improvements.

14. Future meeting topics. The committee reviewed future meeting topics that have been raised over the past year in its conversations. The committee will discuss officiating fees, championship ticket prices and a championships hosting review.

15. Future meeting schedule.

- a. August 20, 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. (videoconference).
- b. August 29 (videoconference; championship bids review)
- c. September 8-10 (in-person meeting; Indianapolis; includes meeting with sport committee chairs)
- d. October 15, 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. (videoconference).
- e. November 19, 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. (videoconference).
- f. December 17, 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. (videoconference).
- g. February 3-4, 2025 (in-person meeting; Indianapolis).

Committee Chair: Karen Tessmer, Worcester State University.

Staff Liaisons: Laura Peterson-Mlynski, Championships and Alliances

Jeff Myers, Academic and Membership Affairs

J.P. Williams, Championships and Alliances.

NCAA Division III Championships Committee June 17-18, 2024, Videoconference	
Attendees:	
Renee Bostic, State University of New York at New Paltz.	
Chad Eisle, Hampden-Sydney College.	
Maureen Harty, College Conference of Illinois & Wisconsin.	
Shannon Howley, Montclair State University	
Jason Doviak, Alfred State College.	
Adaobi Nebuwa, Colby College.	
Duey Naatz, University of Wisconsin-Stout.	
Holly Sheilley, Transylvania University.	

Sara Shoffner, Huntington College.
Karen Tessmer, Worcester State University.
Leonard Trevino, Chatham University.
Jason Verdugo, University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire.
Absentees:
None.
Guests in Attendance:
None.
NCAA Staff Liaisons in Attendance:
Jeff Myers, Academic and Membership Affairs.
Laura Peterson-Mlynski, Championships and Alliances.
J.P. Williams, Championships and Alliances.
Other NCAA Staff Members in Attendance:
Mark Aiken, Kevin Alcox, Margaret Gaines-Hornberger, Eric Hartung, Ashley Jenkins, Caleb Kolby, Victoria Lipscomb, Louise McCleary, Bill Regan, Lynda Tealer, Mikaela Topper and Kelly Whitaker.