



**REPORT OF THE NCAA DIVISION III MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
PLAYING AND PRACTICE SEASONS SUBCOMMITTEE
JULY 1, 2020, VIDEOCONFERENCE**

ACTION ITEMS.

1. Legislative items.

- **Approve a Blanket Waiver Allowing Institutions to Declare Alternate Playing and Practice Seasons for Fall Sports (including Football) - Bylaws 17.1.1.1 and 17.1.1.2.**
 - (1) Recommendation. To allow institutions the discretion to designate the spring as the traditional segment for fall sports. The NCAA fall sports championships would remain as scheduled and institutions declaring a traditional segment in the spring for a sport(s) would not be eligible for that fall championship(s).
 - (2) Effective Date. Immediate. The Division III Management Council Playing and Practice Seasons Subcommittee noted the recommendation would apply for the 2020-21 academic year.
 - (3) Rationale. The subcommittee seeks to provide institutions and conferences appropriate flexibility in scheduling contests and dates of competition and providing student-athletes with meaningful participation opportunities in the regular season, while also balancing the impact of COVID-19. The subcommittee noted several Division III member institutions have indicated they will not be supporting competition for teams during the fall semester, and permitting institutions and conferences to designate the spring as an alternate playing and practice season for fall Division III championship sports will allow institutions to keep student-athletes engaged throughout the entire academic year.
 - (4) Budget Impact. None.
 - (5) Student-Athlete Impact. Provides institutions with the flexibility to offer their student-athletes a meaningful participation opportunity in the regular season while also maintaining the ability to practice during the nontraditional segment.

2. Nonlegislative items.

- None.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS.

- 1. Welcome and announcements.** Laura Mooney welcomed the subcommittee members and the 2020-21 Division III governance postgraduate intern, Jarett Gerald.

2. **Review subcommittee's June 17, 2020, report.** The subcommittee reviewed and approved the report from its June 17 videoconference.
3. **Consideration of 2020-21 playing seasons.** The subcommittee discussed Bylaw 17 playing season regulations for the 2020-21 academic year and reviewed various potential approaches to address concerns regarding playing season regulations in wake of the ongoing COVID-19 public health crisis (See Attachment). The subcommittee confirmed it should continue to utilize a flexible approach to NCAA regulations; and noted the health and safety of student-athletes, the student-athlete experience, minimizing interference with the academic program of student-athletes and institutional viability should serve as guiding principles when determining the appropriate amount of flexibility to provide. The subcommittee noted it will continue to review approaches to playing season regulations for the 2020-21 academic year during its July 8, 2020, meeting.
4. **Future meetings.** July 8, 2020.
5. **Adjournment.** The subcommittee adjourned at 4:12 p.m. Eastern time.

Committee Chair: Laura Mooney, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts

Staff Liaisons: Tiffany Alford, Academic and Membership Affairs

Laura Peterson, Championships and Corporate Alliances

Zach Romash, Academic and Membership Affairs

NCAA Division III Management Council Playing and Practice Seasons Subcommittee July 1, 2020, Videoconference	
Attendees:	
Sarah Feyerherm, Washington College (Maryland).	
Catherine Lanigan, Juniata College.	
Laura Mooney, chair; Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts.	
Kandis Schram, Maryville College (Tennessee).	
Michael Vienna, Emory University.	
Joseph Walsh, Great Northeast Athletic Conference.	
Michelle Walsh, Vassar College.	
NCAA Staff Members in Attendance:	
Tiffany Alford, Laura Peterson and Zach Romash.	
Other NCAA Staff Members in Attendance:	
Lauren Frost, Jarett Gerald, Louise McCleary and Jeff Myers.	



**Division III Management Council Playing and Practice Season Subcommittee
2020-21 Academic Year: Playing Season Considerations**

Issue.

The Division III Management Council Playing and Practice Season Subcommittee is asked to make recommendations regarding appropriate relief from Bylaw 17 playing season regulations for the 2020-21 academic year due to disruption caused by the ongoing COVID-19 public health crisis.

Background.

Several institutions have already publicly declared that they will not conduct any sports during the fall semester. Additionally, many institutions have amended their academic calendars to eliminate fall breaks and end on-campus instruction by Thanksgiving. A return to campus after the first of the year is also a topic of discussion for member institutions. These decisions have resulted in member institutions inquiring about opportunities for their student-athletes. The academic and membership affairs staff have received requests (either formally or informally) from at least eight different conferences for flexibility regarding the application of Bylaw 17 playing seasons regulations. Those requests have involved: (1) Greater flexibility to conduct the fall non-traditional segment for spring sports; (2) Allowing fall sports to conduct their traditional segment in the spring; and (3) Moving the start date for basketball, ice hockey and wrestling to earlier in the fall semester.

The Division III Administrative Committee directed any significant change to the playing season regulations should be reviewed by Division III Management Council and if necessary, by Division III Presidents Council. Consequently, this subcommittee is asked to review the playing season regulations and recommend what, if any, flexibility to the playing seasons regulations should be available for this academic year.

Review principles.

Nearly all governance committees have agreed the extenuating circumstance involving COVID-19 warrants a flexible approach to NCAA regulations. However, the challenge is in determining how much flexibility and when that flexibility should be exercised. Consequently, it may be helpful to establish a set of principles to help guide this subcommittee in its review. The following serve as a starting point for establishing guiding principles:

1. Any amendments should not compromise the health and safety of student-athletes specifically, and the campus community more generally.
2. Any amendments should foster a positive student-athlete experience.

3. Any amendments should maintain the guiding principle that the playing seasons are regulated to minimize interference with the academic programs of student-athletes.
4. Institutional viability issues (e.g. enrollment management, personnel limitations, resources) should be evaluated as part of proposed changes.

Concepts.

Outlined below are potential approaches that address the concerns regarding playing season regulations. All of these approaches are presented within the context of the NCAA championships remaining as scheduled. The potential approaches for the 2020-21 academic year, are as follows:

1. The current Bylaw 17 regulations should not be amended.
2. With respect to fall sports, start date flexibility was granted and any consideration for spring participation should be reviewed at a later date.
3. Waivers of Bylaw 17 should be reviewed on a case by case basis and should not be reviewed from a division-wide perspective.
4. Bylaw 17 flexibility should be granted before the start of the 2020-21 academic year.
5. Other approaches?

Varying degrees of flexibility.

If the subcommittee wants to explore option #4 above, then below are several options for consideration.

1. Winter sports. The most immediate issue is whether the sports of basketball, ice hockey and wrestling should have an alternate start date. AMA received an informal request to review this issue (Attachment A). Advocates for a change suggest moving the start date earlier allows for greater opportunities to conduct contests before the end of the semester. This change would not allow for more weeks in the season. Therefore, if this format was chosen by an institution, they would have to provide more off weeks during the season to stay within the week's limitations.

A more flexible approach would be to treat these three sports like other winter sports and not have a specific start date but still have the weeks limitations.

Further flexibility would be to allow an institution a specified number of days to conduct athletically related activity. For example, the current 19 weeks at 6 days per week would be changed to a 114-day season. The institution could conduct those days (which would include competitions) at any time during the academic year. The contest limits would not be changed.

2. Fall sports: One potential approach would be to allow institutions to define the spring season as its traditional segment (See request from NESCAC, Attachment B). Practically, an institution would flip its nontraditional and traditional segments. Division II has provided a waiver to allow a similar approach to its playing seasons. (Division II blanket waiver, Attachment C)

A more flexible approach would be to treat all fall sports as segment sports like golf, rowing and tennis.

Further flexibility would be to convert the playing season into days and allow institutions to conduct their season as they determine is appropriate. For example, the 18 total weeks: could be viewed as 100 days (e.g. 14 traditional weeks (14 x 6) plus 16 NT opportunities). The start date could be as early as August 10th and the end date would be the week before final exams for the academic year. Institutions could use those 100 days as it determines is in the best interest of the student-athletes. Contests would be conducted as part of those 100 days. Contest maximums would not change; however, this subcommittee may want to provide consideration for the non-traditional contest date (e.g. baseball maximum contest would be increased by two contests to account for the nontraditional contest date allowance).

3. Spring sports: Similar approaches could be applied to spring sports. This subcommittee already recommended increased flexibility for the nontraditional segment and no further recommendation is needed at this time. However, if this subcommittee determines that greater flexibility is warranted then the same analysis for fall sports could be applied. Specifically, treat all as segment sports or convert to days and have the entire academic year to conduct the season.