

Division: I

Proposal Number: 2019-90

Title: PLAYING AND PRACTICE SEASONS -- MEN'S SOCCER -- ACADEMIC YEAR PLAYING AND PRACTICE SEASON MODEL

Status: Ready for Vote

Intent: In men's soccer, to modify the playing and practice season, as specified.

Category: Amendment

Bylaws: Amend 17.19, as follows:

17.19 Soccer. Regulations for computing the soccer playing season are set forth in Bylaw 17.1. (See Figure 17-1 and Figure 17-2.)

17.19.1 Length of Playing Season.

(a) Men. The length of an institution's playing season in men's soccer shall be limited to a 132-day season, which shall consist of a fall and spring segment (each consisting of consecutive days) and which may exclude only required off days per Bylaw 17.1.7.4 or 17.1.7.6 and official vacation, holiday and final-examination periods during which no practice or competition shall occur.

(b) Women. The length of an institution's playing season in women's soccer shall be limited to a 132-day season, which may consist of two segments (each consisting of consecutive days) and which may exclude only required off days per Bylaw 17.1.7.4 or 17.1.7.6 and official vacation, holiday and final-examination periods during which no practice or competition shall occur.

17.19.2 Preseason Practice.

(a) Men. An institution shall not commence practice sessions before the following dates:

(1) Fall Segment. The Friday of the 13th weekend before Thanksgiving Day.

(2) Spring Segment. The Friday of the 11th weekend before the start of the NCAA Division I Men's Soccer Championship.

(b) Women. An institution shall not commence practice sessions before the date that permits a maximum of 21 units (see Bylaw 17.02.13) before the first scheduled regular-season intercollegiate contest (not a scrimmage, exhibition game or alumni contest that may occur before the first scheduled regular-season contest).

17.19.3 First Contest or Date of Competition.

(a) Men. An institution shall not play its first regular-season contest *or engage in its first date of competition (game)* with outside competition before the **following dates:**

(1) Fall Segment. The Friday before the 12th 11th weekend before the start of the NCAA Division I Men's Soccer Championship Thanksgiving Day (see Figure 17-2), *except that an alumni contest may be played the previous weekend.*

(2) Spring Segment. The Friday before the 9th weekend before the start of the NCAA Division I Men's Soccer Championship.

(b) Women. An institution shall not play its first regular-season contest or engage in its first date of competition (game) with outside competition before the Thursday before the 12th weekend before the start of the NCAA Division I Women's Soccer Championship (see Figure 17-2), except that an alumni contest may be played the previous weekend.

[17.19.3 unchanged.]

17.19.3.1 Exception -- Scrimmages/Exhibition Games.

(a) Men. An institution may play up to three (two during the fall segment, one during the spring segment) scrimmages or exhibition games (which shall not count toward the institution's won-lost record) prior to the first scheduled regular-season contest of the applicable segment, provided such scrimmages or exhibition games are conducted during the institution's declared playing season per Bylaw 17.19.1 and are counted against the maximum number of contests (see Bylaw 17.19.5.1). Contests that would otherwise be exempted from the maximum number of contests per Bylaw 17.19.5.3 shall count against the maximum if they are played prior to the date specified for the first permissible regular-season contest of the applicable segment.

(b) Women. An institution may play up to three scrimmages or exhibition games (which shall not count toward the institution's won-lost record) prior to the first scheduled regular-season contest during a particular academic year, provided such scrimmages or exhibition games are conducted during the institution's declared playing season per Bylaw 17.19.1 and are counted against the maximum number of contests (see Bylaw 17.19.5.1). Contests that would otherwise be exempted from the maximum number of contests per Bylaw 17.19.5.3 shall count against the maximum if they are played during the preseason practice period prior to the date specified for the first permissible regular-season contest.

17.19.4 End of Regular Playing Season.

(a) Men. An institution shall conclude all practice and competition (games and scrimmages) by the following:

(1) Fall Segment. The Sunday immediately preceding Thanksgiving Day. A seven-day discretionary period shall be provided starting with the Monday immediately preceding Thanksgiving Day, during which countable athletically related activities shall be prohibited.

(2) Spring Segment. The conclusion of the NCAA Division I Men's Soccer Championship.

(b) Women. An institution shall conclude all practice and competition (games and scrimmages) by the last date of final exams for the regular academic year at the institution.

17.19.5 Number of Contests and Dates of Competition.

17.19.5.1 Maximum Limitations -- Institutional.

(a) Men. An institution shall limit its total playing schedule with outside competition to:

(1) Fall Segment. Fourteen contests (12 regular-season contests and two scrimmages or exhibitions), except for those contests excluded under Bylaws 17.19.5.3 and 17.19.5.4. An institution is limited to one contest per weekend (defined as Friday through Sunday) and two midweek (defined as Monday through Thursday) contests in the segment with a limit of one midweek contest in a particular week.

(2) Spring Segment. Nine contests (eight regular-season contests and one scrimmage or exhibition). An institution is limited to one contest per weekend (defined as Friday through Sunday) and one midweek (defined as Monday through Thursday) contest in the segment.

(b) Women. An institution shall limit its total playing schedule with outside competition during the playing season in any one year to 20 contests during the segment in which the NCAA championship is conducted and five dates of competition during another segment, except for those contests and/or dates of competition excluded under Bylaws 17.19.5.3 and 17.19.5.4. Travel to competition in the nonchampionship segment shall be restricted to ground transportation, unless there are no Division I institutions that sponsor the sport located within 400 miles of the institution.

17.19.5.1.1 Exception -- Isolated Institution -- **Women's Soccer.** *If In women's soccer, if* there are fewer than five other Division I institutions that sponsor soccer *(for the applicable gender)* located within 400 miles of the institution, the institution may use any form of transportation to travel to the number of nonchampionship segment competitions that represents the difference between the number of other institutions and five.

17.19.5.1.2 Hawaii or Alaska Exception -- Nonchampionship Segment Travel -- **Women's Soccer.** *Once* **In women's soccer, once** every four years, an institution may use any form of transportation for travel to Hawaii or Alaska for nonchampionship segment competition against an active member institution located in Hawaii or Alaska.

[17.19.5.1.3 unchanged.]

17.19.5.2 Maximum Limitations -- Student-Athlete.

(a) Men. An individual student-athlete may participate in not more than 14 contests (12 regular-season contests and two scrimmages or exhibitions) during the fall segment and not more than nine contests (eight regular-season contests and one scrimmage or exhibition) during the spring segment. This limitation includes those contests in which the student represents the institution in accordance with Bylaw 17.02.8, including competition as a member of the varsity, junior varsity or freshman team of the institution.

(b) Women. An individual student-athlete may participate in each academic year in not more than 20 contests during the segment in which the NCAA championship is conducted and five dates of competition during another segment. This limitation includes those contests in which the student represents the institution in accordance with Bylaw 17.02.8, including competition as a member of the varsity, junior varsity or freshman team of the institution.

[17.19.5.3 through 17.19.5.4 unchanged.]

[17.19.6 through 17.19.8 unchanged.]

Source: Atlantic Coast Conference and Big Ten Conference

Effective Date: August 1, 2022

Topical Area: Playing and Practice Seasons

Rationale: The men's soccer community has spent considerable time developing consensus for a new playing season model that would redistribute the playing season throughout the academic year. The current one-term approach to the competition schedule features a highly compressed competitive schedule in the fall that culminates with the NCAA championship in mid-December. The degree of compression in the fall is inconsistent with emerging sports-science data, which have indicated increased injury rates when two matches are played per week as opposed to one. The sponsors also recognize potential concerns regarding preseason acclimatization, transition periods and training between matches and welcome collaboration with the NCAA Committee on Competitive Safeguards and Medical Aspects of Sport to further enhance this model. NCAA data have also shown that men's soccer student-athletes arrive to college with the third highest GPA among men's sports, yet finish with the fifth highest GPA. This phenomenon could be attributable to the frequency of midweek games, in addition to first-year students adjusting to being full-time student-athletes during the compressed fall term. By redistributing the playing and practice season, the proposed model would benefit student-athletes in a number of ways. Specifically, there would be academic and health benefits by nearly eliminating midweek games. In addition, student-athletes would have more time to focus on final exams and friends and family, as the season would pause before Thanksgiving Day and would not restart until mid-February. The balanced season more closely aligns with the playing and training seasons in professional and international soccer. Finally, the balanced model would improve the student-athlete experience during conference and NCAA championships by increasing the likelihood of good weather and better fan attendance. All these improvements can be accomplished while maintaining the current 132-day format for the season, which would ensure that the overall amount of time student-athletes are in-season would not increase.

Estimated Budget Impact: Variable. A later start to preseason in the fall could result in cost savings. Different scheduling approaches and the elimination of the current ground-transportation restriction in the spring could lead to cost increases.

Impact on Student-Athlete's Time (Academic and/or Athletics): No increase to length of playing season; projected to have less missed class time due to fewer midweek contests.

Position Statements:

Student-Athlete Advisory Committee	Supports	Simple majority of committee supported proposal; however, opposition was noted due to concerns surrounding limited resources for institutions and the impact on student-athletes in other sports.
Committee on Academics	Opposes	The committee noted the following concerns: (1) Additional pressure on academic support staff; (2) Concern with a lack of an off-season period to explore other academic interests; and (3) Potential for more rather than less missed class time.
Student-Athlete Experience Committee	No Formal Position	The committee recognizes that there may be benefits to this model; however, it believes that further review is necessary. Specifically, the committee is interested in the outcomes of the CSMAS study, SAAC's position and whether this model addresses the specific concerns. Lastly, the committee believes if this model is the appropriate model it would like women's soccer to be considered as well. The committee also noted concerns with facility availability.
Committee on Competitive Safeguards and Medical Aspects of Sports	No Formal Position	The committee recommended the sponsors consider the following: (1) Identify the minimal amount of time that should be required between competitions. Current wording could be misinterpreted to allow back-to-back contests; (2) Reconfiguration of the preseason should be part of this effort, but guidance is not yet available; (3) Attention should be given to ensure that time salvaged from a reconfiguration of the season is not lost to increased frequency, volume and/or intensity of practice; and (4) The burden on athletics health care providers, especially athletics trainers, should be considered.

History:

Jul 15, 2019	Submitted to National Office	
Nov 15, 2019	In Progress	
Feb 1, 2020	In Progress	Proposal edited to clarify that an institution is limited to one contest per weekend (defined as Friday through Sunday) and one midweek (defined as Monday through Thursday) contest per week.
Feb 7, 2020	Ready for Vote	

Legislative References

Legislative Cite	Title
17.19	Soccer.
17.19.1	Length of Playing Season.
17.19.2	Preseason Practice.
17.19.3	First Contest or Date of Competition.

Legislative Cite	Title
17.19.3.1	Exception -- Scrimmages/Exhibition Games.
17.19.4	End of Regular Playing Season.
17.19.5	Number of Contests and Dates of Competition.
17.19.5.1	Maximum Limitations -- Institutional.
17.19.5.1.1	Exception -- Isolated Institution.
17.19.5.1.2	Hawaii or Alaska Exception -- Nonchampionship Segment Travel.
17.19.5.2	Maximum Limitations -- Student-Athlete.

Student-Athlete Success/Well-Being: Yes. This proposal has significant student-athlete benefits, including less missed class time, additional rest and recovery between contests and more similar training to professional and international soccer.

Enforceable and Merits Outweigh Monitoring Burdens: Yes. The proposed enhancements to student-athlete well-being outweigh any monitoring or compliance burdens.

Consequential or Nationally Significant: Yes. This proposal is significant to all men's soccer programs.

Division I Commitment: The Commitment to Student-Athlete Well-Being.
