

Note: This letter was originally submitted in October 2019. It has been updated to include information and signatures for Elmar Bolowich, who has re-joined college coaching ranks, and Brian Wiese, whose Georgetown Hoyas won the 2019 NCAA Championship. 100% of the active Division I coaches who have won the NCAA Championship continue to strongly encourage adopting 2019-90.

February 12, 2020

To: Division I Council
Division I Competition Oversight Committee
Division I Legislative Committee
Division I Student-Athlete Experience Committee
Division I Student-Athlete Advisory Committee
Committee on Competitive Safeguards and Medical Aspects of Sports

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Incremental change is comfortable because it happens within the safety of the world we know. Revolutionary change on the other hand, brings forth a world we don't yet know, and that is uncomfortable—scary even, depending on the context. As humans we are hardwired to resist such change because instinctively, safe is better than scary. There are times, however, when progress demands revolutionary change. College soccer is at such a moment. After years of study and discussion, it's time to act boldly to bring our playing and practice season model into the 21st Century.

We are the twelve active coaches who have won the Division I Men's Soccer National Championship. Together we have over 2,800 Division I wins between us and 17 national titles. By those objective measurements, our programs have been successful under the current model, and that has resulted in personal success as coaches. We have been fortunate in our careers, so we have no incentive to support adopting the 21st Century Model other than this: a steel conviction that doing so is in the best interest of college soccer.

We are not alone in our conviction. Over 90% of the 206 Division I men's soccer coaches believe it is in the best interest of college soccer to adopt the 21st Century Model (Proposal 2019-90), which in a nutshell does the following:

- maintains the current 22-week/132-day playing and practice season
- reduces the overall number of games played in an academic year from 25 to 23
- redistributes games throughout the fall and spring segments, which eases compression and nearly eliminates midweek games
- moves the postseason from late fall to the spring, which not only allows for warmer weather but keeps fall final exams, which are the first college finals for freshmen, free from interference

It is important to understand that some of us have had (and still could have) opportunities in professional soccer, but we are all here because we believe in intercollegiate athletics—a model that integrates our sport into higher education. We would not be advocating for this change if we did not truly and firmly believe that adopting the 21st Century Model would provide the optimal environment for our students in terms of their health, their academics, their development in the game, and simply

their life as college students. To that end, we want to help further put into context the reality of what we are imposing on our students with the current model.

Most college sports rightfully impose a lighter playing load on the players as compared to professional leagues in the same sports. For example:

- The college football regular season has 25% fewer games than the NFL, 40% fewer if you count NFL preseason games.
- UNC will play 16 men's basketball games in a 60-day period in the heart of its season (Jan. 1 to Feb. 29, 2020), whereas the Golden State Warriors will play 29 in a 61-day period in the heart of its season (Dec. 1 to Jan. 30, 2020).
- Vanderbilt played 34 baseball games in a 60-day period in the heart of its season this year (Mar. 20 – May 18, 2019), whereas the New York Yankees played 54 games in a 60-day period in the heart of its season (April 1 – May 30).

You get the picture. In college soccer, however, the ratios are inverted. To demonstrate, Maryland will play 15 men's soccer matches in a 60-day period in the heart of its season (Sep. 1 to Oct. 31, 2019), whereas Manchester United will play 8 English Premier League matches in a 60-day period in the heart of its season (Jan. 1 to Feb. 29, 2020). Think about that—when comparing schedules in the heart of the season, the playing load for college soccer players is nearly double that of the highest level of professional soccer, which is the opposite of what we do in other sports.

Think further about what those numbers are telling us. A men's college soccer team will play almost the exact same number of games in the same period of time in the heart of its season as a men's college basketball team; however, it will do so in a game with a playing area 16 times larger than a basketball court, with players running several miles farther per game, with extensive substitution restrictions, no time-outs, 50 more minutes of playing time with no breaks other than halftime, and more than likely without the aid of charter flights, which can lessen the impact of away trips.

Also notice the significance of the contrast with professional soccer. The English Premier League is the most popular and profitable soccer league in the world. Its revenues exceed those of the NBA, and it does so with 10 fewer teams based in a much smaller country. The Premier League does not play one match per week throughout the season because it would not be profitable to play more frequently; it plays one match per week because that is what is best for the players, who can cover upwards of seven miles in a match.

There is one period of the Premier League season that serves as an exception, however, and that is the annual Christmas program. During this time, rather than provide a winter break as most other top professional leagues do, Premier League teams will play as many as four matches in a 12-day period surrounding Christmas, which is a scheduling pattern that bears a much closer resemblance to the college soccer season than the rest of the Premier League season. In January 2018, this is what Pep Guardiola, who has managed Manchester City to the past two Premier League titles and is widely regarded as one of the best managers in the world, said about the Christmas program's impact on the players:

“We are going to kill them. I know the show must go on, but that is not normal. If you tell me that technically, physically it's good for the players: no, it's a disaster.”

Our entire fall season is the Premier League Christmas program.

In considering whether to change, it is important that we do not confuse what the resilient human body can take with what we should be asking of our students' bodies. Knowing what we know now, what we are asking of our students is nonsensical, especially in the setting of higher education. Our current model results in an increased level of soft-tissue injuries, results in fatigue that is a risk factor for concussion and can adversely impact mental health, and the model occupies students' time with games and/or away trips midweek and on weekends throughout the fall. All of which can adversely affect academic performance and the general college experience.

Maintaining the status quo is not defensible when a better alternative exists, and the only explanation for why we have the current model is that this is the way it has always been done. Well, history is littered with examples of right and necessary change replacing "the way things have always been done." Adopting the 21st Century Model is a big, revolutionary change for our sport—we concede that—but it is the right thing to do for college soccer, not just for our current students, but for students for generations to come.

We unanimously and enthusiastically urge adopting Proposal 2019-90, which will bring college soccer into the 21st Century.

Respectfully and sincerely,



Elmar Bolowich
George Mason University
2001 National Champions at UNC



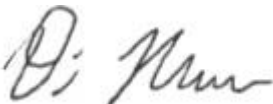
Sasho Cirovski
University of Maryland
2005, 2008, and 2018 National Champions



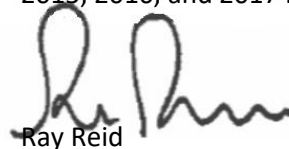
George Gelnovatch
University of Virginia
2009 and 2014 National Champions



Jeremy Gunn
Stanford University
2015, 2016, and 2017 National Champions



Dave Masur
St. John's University
1996 National Champions



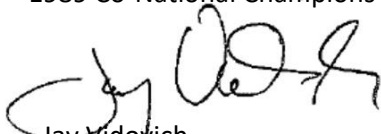
Ray Reid
University of Connecticut
2000 National Champions



Steve Sampson
Cal Poly
1989 Co-National Champions at Santa Clara



Carlos Somoano
University of North Carolina
2011 National Champions



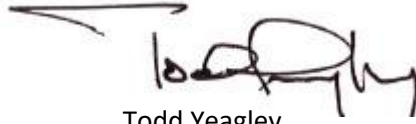
Jay Vidovich
University of Pittsburgh
2007 National Champions at Wake Forest



Tim Vom Steeg
UC Santa Barbara
2006 National Champions

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian Wiese". The letters are cursive and fluid.

Brian Wiese
Georgetown University
2019 National Champions

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Todd Yeagley". The signature is more stylized and includes a long horizontal stroke at the beginning.

Todd Yeagley
Indiana University
2012 National Champions