



June 18, 2019

Rob Kehoe
 Director of College Programs
 United Soccer Coaches

Dear Rob,

The Big Ten Conference will be sponsoring a proposal in the 2019-20 NCAA legislative cycle to implement the 21st Century Model for Men’s Soccer. The purpose of the proposal is to enhance critical elements of the overall collegiate experience, including academics, health, social life, development in the sport, and championship experience. This enhancement would occur primarily through redistributing and reducing contests while maintaining the existing 132-day playing and practice season limit. In addition, nearly all midweek games would be eliminated under the model, and conference and NCAA tournaments would move from late fall to late spring.

The Big Ten’s proposal is based on the 21st Century Model that had been developed by men’s soccer coaches nationally over several years, but is modified in relation to the initial version of that model. Specifically, whereas the initial model was based on a 144-day/24-week playing and practice season, the Big Ten proposal will maintain the current 132-day/22-week playing and practice season. Further, whereas the initial model maintained the current number of 25 overall contests (fall and spring combined), the Big Ten proposal will reduce the overall number of contests from 25 to 23. Finally, although the initial model included a reduction from 20 hours per week during the season to 18 hours, the Big Ten proposal will maintain the existing 20-hour limit in the interest of avoiding the administrative burden associated with having one sport in which the weekly hour limit is different than that of all other sports.

General features of the proposed model listed in comparison with the current model are as follows:

	21st Century Model	Current Model
Season Length	Fall: 12 weeks/13 weekends (incl. preseason) Spring: 10 weeks/11 weekends	Fall: 13+ weeks/14 weekends (incl. preseason) Spring 8+ weeks
Contest Limits	Fall: 14 games, including up to 2 exhibitions Spring: 9 games, including up to 1 exhibition	Fall: 20 games, including up to 3 exhibitions Spring: 5 games (or dates of competition)
Midweek Limits	Fall: Max. of 2 midweek games (Mon.-Thurs.) Spring: Max. of 1 midweek game (Mon.-Thurs.)	Fall: No limit on midweek games Spring: Prohibition on missed class
Postseason	Conference tournaments in mid-to-late April; NCAA tournament throughout May	Conference tournaments in mid-November; NCAA tournament mid-Nov. through mid-Dec.

For additional details, please see the attached draft proposal (Attachment A) as well as a side-by-side comparison of calendars displaying both the 21st Century Model and the current model as applied to the 2019-20 academic year (Attachment B). Note that the effective date has been left “to be determined” as we will need identify a date that would be reasonable in light of the logistical changes adopting the Model would entail.

As you know, this proposal is the culmination of years of development and moving to such a model has consistently received overwhelming support by both men’s soccer coaches and the students who play men’s soccer. Some of assorted benefits those groups have embraced include the following:

- **Academics:** The Preliminary Report produced following the May 2015 Soccer Summit hosted by the NCAA Sport-Science Institute noted that “male NCAA soccer players arrive at college with the third highest high school GPA among NCAA [men’s] sports, but finish with only the fifth highest GPA.” Nearly eliminating midweek games will significantly reduce missed class time, which in turn will allow men’s soccer players to have an academic experience that is much more comparable to that of the general student body. In addition, starting later in the fall and ending earlier (before Thanksgiving) will be particularly beneficial to freshmen who are getting acclimated to college life for the first time. By contrast, under the current model, freshmen are forced to hit the ground running before classes begin in the fall and depending on how far their team advances in postseason play, could be occupied with the soccer season up to and during their first experience with college finals.
- **Health:** Data not available or tracked years ago is now available, including distances covered by players during 90-minute matches, which can exceed 7 miles depending on the position. For context, a professional basketball player, playing in a 48-minute game over an area 1/16th the size of a soccer field, will cover less than 3 miles per game. A telling point cited in the Preliminary Report referenced above is that “literature in professional soccer suggest a six-fold increase in injury rates when two matches are played per week as opposed to one.” Playing only one game each week would allow more time between matches for physical and mental recovery, and if the literature cited is accurate, injuries should decrease.
- **Championship Experience:** The Men’s College Cup has lost some of the luster and energy it had in the mid-1990’s due to multiple factors, but the timing of the event in mid-December has not helped. Conducting the College Cup in better weather would improve the event’s chance of success, perhaps even more so if it were to join the wave of promotional energy currently seen with other spring championships such as baseball, softball, and lacrosse.
- **Development in the Sport:** The U.S. Soccer Federation has regularly lobbied college soccer coaches to alter the playing and practice season so that training is balanced more evenly throughout the year—this request is not new and it is neither the basis nor catalyst for this proposal. Nevertheless, the issue is relevant when considering that soccer players, who specialize early at a high rate in comparison to other sports, arrive on campus conditioned and accustomed to playing the sport year round. Notably, the USSF’s Development Academy, which

consists of elite players at the U-12 through U-18 levels, is based on a full-time, 10-month program that begins in September and ends in July, with 25-30 league games per season, not counting playoffs. The 21st Century Model would align with the training regimen Division-I soccer players are accustomed to upon arrival, and while skill-development considerations should not dictate policy decisions for any college sport, if policy change that serves our core mission simultaneously benefits skill development, it is not wrong for development in the sport to be seen as a positive byproduct.

Thank you for the role you have played in the process that has led to this point. We welcome and look forward to the opportunity to continue to work with United Soccer Coaches as well as other conferences as we formally sponsor the proposal and proceed through the legislative process. To that end, feel free to share this correspondence and related attachments as you deem appropriate, and let me know if there are any questions.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chad A. Hawley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Chad A. Hawley
Associate Commissioner, Policy
Big Ten Conference

*****DRAFT PROPOSAL—21st Century Model for Men's Soccer*****

Intent: To establish a 21st Century playing and practice season model for men's soccer, which will enhance critical elements of the overall collegiate experience (including academics, health, social life, development in the sport, and championship experience) through a redistribution and reduction of contests while maintaining a 132-day season limit, and by moving conference and NCAA tournaments from the fall to the spring.

Notes: *The below proposed amendments are specific to men's soccer; existing rules would be maintained and apply to women's soccer. This proposal would also need to be accompanied by a contingent request to move the NCAA Division I Men's Soccer Championship from the fall to the spring in the event the proposal were to be adopted.*

Bylaws: Amend as follows:

17.19.1 Length of Playing Season.

(a) **Men.** The length of an institution's playing season in soccer shall be limited to a 132-day season, which ~~may~~ shall 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~~ For the fall segment, 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) Saturday of the 13th weekend before Thanksgiving. For the spring segment, an institution shall not commence practice sessions before the Saturday of the 11th weekend before the start of the NCAA tournament.

17.19.3 First Contest or Date of Competition.

(a) **Men.** ~~An~~ For the fall segment, an institution shall not play its first regular-season contest or engage in its first date of competition (game) with outside competition before the Friday before the 12th 11th weekend before the start of the applicable NCAA Division I Soccer Championship (see [Figure 17-2](#)), except that an alumni contest may be played the previous weekend Thanksgiving. For the spring segment, an institution shall not play its first regular-season contest or engage in its first date of competition (game) with outside competition before the Friday before the 10th weekend before the start of the NCAA tournament.

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) soccer 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~~ 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 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. A member institution shall conclude all practice and competition ~~(games and scrimmages) in soccer during the fall segment by the Sunday that immediately precedes Thanksgiving. A seven-day discretionary period shall then be provided beginning with the Monday that immediately precedes Thanksgiving, during which time required athletically related activities shall be prohibited. Practice and competition during the spring segment shall conclude by the last date of final exams for the regular academic year at the institution~~ conclusion of the NCAA Division I Men's Soccer Championship.

17.19.5 Number of Contests and Dates of Competition.

17.19.5.1 Maximum Limitations -- Institutional.

(a) Men. A member institution shall limit its total playing schedule with outside competition in soccer during the institution's soccer 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~~ 14 contests during the fall segment (including 2 scrimmages/exhibitions) and 9 contests during the spring segment (including 1 scrimmage/exhibition) except for those contests and/or dates of competition excluded under Bylaws 17.19.5.3 and 17.19.5.4. No more than two of the 14 fall-segment contests may be played midweek (defined as Monday through Thursday), and no more than one of the 9 spring-segment contests may be played midweek. 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 there are fewer than five other Division I institutions that sponsor women's 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 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 each academic year in not more than ~~20 soccer contests during the segment in which the NCAA championship is conducted and five dates of competition in soccer during another segment~~ 14 contests during the fall segment

ATTACHMENT A

(including 2 scrimmages/exhibitions) and 9 contests during the spring segment (including 1 scrimmage/exhibition). 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.

Rationale: Men's soccer coaches have worked for several years developing a model that would modernize the manner in which Division-I men's soccer is structured. The current unbalanced approach to the fall and spring competition seasons features a highly compressed competitive schedule in the fall that culminates with an NCAA championship event that concludes outdoors in mid-December. The degree of compression in the fall is inconsistent with emerging sport-science data, which have indicated increased injury rates when two matches are played per week as opposed to one, which is consistent with data that now show players regularly logging more than seven miles per match. NCAA data have also shown that male soccer players arrive to college with the 3rd highest GPA among men's sports, yet finish with the 5th highest GPA, which could be attributable to some extent to the frequency of midweek games during the fall as well as the highly compressed nature of the fall season for first-year students adjusting to being full-time college students as well as a Division-I varsity athletes. By redistributing and reducing the playing and practice season, the proposed 21st Century Model for men's soccer would benefit academics and health by nearly eliminating midweek games. Moreover, ending the fall segment before Thanksgiving would provide for a meaningful holiday break that would include fall final exams and last through mid-February. A rebalanced model would also provide a training experience familiar to Division-I men's soccer students who upon arrival are accustomed to a balanced fall and spring competitive schedule. Finally, maintaining the current 132-day format for the season will ensure that the overall amount of time a student is in season would remain the same under the 21st Century Model.

Effective Date: To be determined.

21st Century Model 2019-20 Prototype

July 19						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
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August 19						
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July 19						
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Current Model 2019-20 Model Schedule

August 19						
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September 19						
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October 19						
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November 19						
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December 19						
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February 20						
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March 20						
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April 20						
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June 20						
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July 20						
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August 20						
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May 20						
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June 20						
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July 20						
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August 20						
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Fall Segment

- 12 weeks/13 weekends (including preseason) ending on the Sunday immediately prior to Thanksgiving
- 12 weeks/13 weekends in which to play 14 games, including up to 2 exhibitions
- No more than 2 midweek games (Mon.-Thu.) allowed
- Required 1 day off per week
- 20 hours max. of CARA per week

Winter Break

- 7-day break following the fall segment
- No CARA the week prior to finals through inst. vacation period; 8 hrs/wk out-of-season CARA otherwise

Spring Segment

- 10 weeks/11 weekends counting back, beg. with the weekend prior to start of the NCAA tourney.
- 10 weeks/11 weekends in which to play 9 games incl. up to 1 exhibition plus a conf. tournament
- No more than 1 midweek game (Mon. - Thu.), excluding conference tournament
- Required 1 day off per week
- 20 hours max of CARA per week

NCAA Tournament

- Using current format, 4 weekends, ending on Mem. Day Weekend; semis/final on 5/22 and 5/24 above
- 5-weekend alt. format: semis on campus on 4th wknd, final on Sat. or Sun. after Mem. Day, 5/30 or 31 above

Fall/ Championship Segment

- 13+ weeks (incl. preseason) with 1st reg. game Fri. of 12th weekend before NCAA tourney (8/30 in 2019)
- 20 games, incl. up to 3 exhib, which may occur prior to 8/30
- Typically 17-18 games over 10 or 11 weeks (depending on conf. tourney format) plus a conf. tournament
- Required 1 day off per week
- 20 hours max. of CARA per week

NCAA Tournament

- Current format: 4 weekends with semis and final on Fri./Sun. of same weekend in mid. Dec.

Winter Break

- 7-day break following the conclusion of the fall season
- No CARA the week prior to finals through inst. vacation period; 8 hrs/wk out-of-season CARA otherwise

Spring/ Nonchampionship Segment

- 8+ weeks, typically starting in mid-Feb. and ending in late April with spring break excluded/given off
- 8+ weeks in which to play 5 games (or technically use 5 dates of competition)
- Required 1 day off per week
- 20 hours max. of CARA per week

Note: Per NCAA rules, the "132-day" season excludes from counting the required 1 day off per week as well as any days off provided during institutional vacation periods. This is why "22 weeks" in the context of NCAA playing and practice season rules equals 132 days (22 x 6) as opposed to 154 days (22 x 7).