

# Phase II

## Life in the Balance

### Softball Proposal

February 2010

TO: NCAA Division II Championships and Legislation Committees.

SUBJECT: Softball Non-championship Segment.

I am writing on behalf of the National Fastpitch Coaches Association regarding the Division II softball playing and practice season.

The NFCA supports the elimination of the “tournament exception” as specified in Proposal No. 2010-6. We also recommend that an additional four dates of competition in the non-championship fall segment be added; teams would be limited to ground transportation, unless the nearest Division II opponent was outside of a 250-mile radius (e.g., Hawaii schools). This addition is overwhelmingly supported by the NFCA membership and Division II Head Coaches Committee.

Since softball is an outdoor spring sport playing a large part of its season in the winter, the fall season is vital, especially for schools in cold-weather climates. The following questions and answers explain the rationale for the NFCA’s position.

1. *Why are fall games in softball so important?*

Fall, which is the non-championship segment for softball, has some of the best weather for an outdoor sport. Because of geographic inequities, fall competition is needed to counter the impact of shorter spring seasons on schools located in cold-weather climates.

Softball is a unique sport in large part because it is a “spring” outdoor sport that begins practice and competition in the winter. Yet, more than one-half of the Division II schools are unable to conduct softball practices or competition outdoors until around March 1. Institutions that are located in cold-weather climates thus need an extended period in the fall to practice and compete outdoors because the weather is generally better in the fall than during the beginning of the championship segment, and they tend to lose practice and competition opportunities in the spring. Elimination of the tournament exemption and then also counting the non-championship season games would increase the existing geographic inequities because it would benefit those schools in the warmer climates that can more easily conduct practices and home competitions early in the championship segment.

Fall contests allow teams to receive reinforcement regarding their progress from fall practices in a more relaxed game-setting environment than during the championship segment, and promotes student-athlete welfare. Based on comments and reactions from the softball student-athletes, NFCA coaches believe that student-athletes prefer playing to practicing and that eliminating the desired fall competition may make the sport less enjoyable for the student-athletes. Since walk-on players are common in Division II, the fall contests also give coaches an opportunity to evaluate walk-ons in game situations.

2. *If the NFCA supports elimination of the tournament exemption, why shouldn’t the fall contests be included as part of the 56-game limit?*

Since most institutions play four to five regular-season tournaments during the championship segment, with an average of two games a day during the three-day tournament format, elimination of the tournament exemption will result in an average of 12 to 15 games that now must be counted in the 56-game limit.

The NFCA supports the elimination of the “tournament exception” since counting each contest in the championship segment toward the limit of 56 provides an accurate and equitable way of documenting the number of regular season contests and avoiding the fluctuations that currently exist (e.g., 40 versus 80 contests played due to the variances in numbers and lengths of championship segment

tournaments).

The NFCA asks that institutions be allowed to play a maximum four dates of competition in the non-championship segment that would not count in the 56-game limitation. If the fall contests, which are not counted in a team's official record, had to be included in the 56-game limitation, softball would be back to its original problem of wide fluctuations of number of games in the championship segment. Cold-weather climate teams would still need to play more contests in the fall when they can play outside, while warm-weather climate schools would save all their games for the championship segment. This discrepancy causes problems for the NCAA Division II Softball Committee when evaluating teams for championship play, as well as for committees trying to evaluate student-athlete performance for postseason honors.

3. *If baseball has a limit of games that includes both the fall and the spring, why shouldn't softball?*

Although there are similarities between baseball and softball, the two sports are different in many ways. One major difference is in the number of innings played. Division II baseball games generally are nine innings (except occasional doubleheaders of seven innings), while softball contests last seven innings and in many instances less if the eight-run rule is implemented. Thus, using 50 games for baseball and 56 for softball, as outlined in the "life in the balance" legislation, baseball plays 450 innings, while softball plays 392. That difference translates to approximately 8 additional softball games if the sport were to use all of baseball's innings.

In addition, softball generally plays doubleheaders, thus reducing travel. Softball players generally miss less class time as well, since warm-up takes less time and one game generally is less than two hours, while baseball games last around three hours.

In addition, many baseball teams do not play fall games with outside competition, but they may have intrasquad scrimmage games in the fall. Since baseball teams may have rosters as large as 45 players, intrasquad scrimmages may be more helpful than outside competition in evaluating team talent. Softball rosters, on the other hand, have 15 to 18 players on average, which also demonstrates why fall contests against outside competition are so important in the non-championship segment.

In closing, we ask you to support the addition of four dates of competition in the non-championship season, with schools limited to ground transportation (unless the nearest Division II competition is outside a 250-mile radius). Division I schools are permitted to play eight contests in the nontraditional season for the same reasons.

Thank you for your consideration of this issue that is critical to the sport of softball. Please let us know if we can provide additional information.

LACY LEE BAKER  
NFCA Executive Director

## DIVISION II LEGISLATIVE ISSUES REQUEST FORM

To submit legislative proposals, please complete this form and email to Kevin Blaskowski, chair [kblaskowski@wtamu.edu](mailto:kblaskowski@wtamu.edu) (West Texas A&M University). To submit proposals, one conference and one other Division II coach from different conference must endorse.

Intent: To eliminate the tournament exemption (Bylaw 17.21.7.1.1) in scheduling for D-II softball. 56 games or scrimmages in the traditional spring season would be counted as 56 contests. In addition, teams would be allowed to schedule four (4) playing dates during their non-championship fall season. No more than two (2) contests may be played on a non-championship date.

NCAA Constitution/Bylaw: 17.21.7.1.1 Page(s) 220

Proposed Effective Date: 2010-2011

### Rationale:

- The elimination of the tournament exception (Bylaw 17.21.7.1.1) will standardize 56 games as the maximum number of contests an institution can play.
- The softball coaches want more uniformity in the maximum number of contests. Currently, the number of games Division II institutions play range from approximately 40 to 70, which makes comparison of teams for championship play very difficult.
- Generate cost savings at many institutions, and
- Make it easier to compare student-athletes' accomplishments for postseason honors.

Proposed by Division II Coach: Kevin Blaskowski

School: West Texas A&M Univ. Conference: Lone Star

Phone: 806-651-4425 Email: kblaskowski@wtamu.edu

### Also endorsed by:

Division II Coach: Kris Mort

School: Mesa State Conference: RMAC

## **Division II Head Coach Caucus List:**

### **CONFERENCE**

California Collegiate Athletic Association  
Central Atlantic Collegiate Conference  
Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association  
Conference Carolinas  
East Coast Conference  
Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference  
Great Lakes Valley Conference  
Great Northwest Athletic Conference  
Gulf South Conference  
Heartland Conference  
Independents  
Lone Star Conference  
Mid-America Intercollegiate Athletics Association  
Northeast-10 Conference  
Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference  
Pacific West Conference  
Peach Belt Athletic Conference  
Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference  
Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference  
South Atlantic Conference  
Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference  
Sunshine State Conference  
West Virginia Intercollegiate Athletic Conference

### **REPRESENTATIVE**

Patti Gerckens  
Dean Johnson  
Miguel Justiniano  
Jimmy Martin  
Steve Christianson  
Everett Roper  
Sue Kunkle  
Pam Knox  
Les Stuedeman  
Scott Libby  
  
Beth Watson  
Susan Anderson  
  
Shawn Semler  
Gwen Kagaoan  
Melissa Mullins  
Edith Gallagher  
Holly Carnes  
Michelle Caddigan  
  
Lesa Bonee  
Brian Howard

### **SCHOOL**

UC San Diego  
Caldwell College  
Fayetteville State  
Limestone College  
NYIT  
Saginaw Valley State University  
University of Southern Indiana  
Western Oregon University  
Alabama Huntsville  
Texas A&M International  
  
Cameron University  
University of Central Missouri  
  
Southwest Minnesota State University  
University of Hawaii Hilo  
Augusta State University  
Mansfield University  
University of Nebraska-Kearney  
Wingate University  
  
Nova Southeastern University  
Ohio Valley University

### **ADDITIONAL NON-VOTING MEMBERS**

Chair	Kevin Blaskowski	West Texas A&M University
Director of Media Relations	Parker Griffith	NFCA

\*\*The Division II Head Coaches Caucus is made up of a representative from each NCAA Division II conference and the independent institutions. Kevin Blaskowski is the chair. It is their responsibility to discuss and develop legislative proposals and have each conference representative take the proposal back to their conference for approval. Once a proposal receives approval, it is then brought back to the Head Coach Caucus and each member is asked to cast their conference's vote on the proposal.

The proposal above was voted unanimously for by the Head Coaches Caucus, 20-0.

The NCAA Division II Softball Committee is in support of these documents.