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NJCAA Adds At Large Teams to Basketball Tournaments

NJCAA Board of Directors Approves Several Momentous Proposals at 2012 Convention

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. – The National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) made its plans for the upcoming 2012-13 academic sports season by passing several meaningful legislative proposals that signal a new way forward for the second-largest intercollegiate athletic organization in the United States.

The 54-member board of directors of the NJCAA gathered for the organization's 71st annual meeting March 28-31 at the Double Tree World Arena in Colorado Springs, Colo., which has served as the national headquarters for the association since 1985.

STUDENT-ATHLETE ELIGIBILITY

In an attempt to address and monitor the recent influx of non-U.S. citizen student-athletes in the NJCAA, the board of directors approved a measure that grants NJCAA participation for non-U.S. citizen student-athletes to those under the age of 22. The new age rule was passed with an implementation date of August 1, 2013.

In addition, the board of directors decided to keep in place a rule that was adopted in 2011 that limits the number of non-U.S. citizen student-athletes that can be certified on an NJCAA eligibility roster. Beginning August 1, 2012, in all sports at the Division I and Division II levels, the number of non-U.S. citizen student-athletes that can be certified on an NJCAA eligibility roster can be no more than one-quarter of the total number of Letter of Intent/Scholarships allowed per association by-laws for each sport.

DIVISION I MEN'S & WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Likely the most significant change the NJCAA approved at its 2012 convention was the change in format and qualification for both its Division I men's and women's basketball championship tournaments. Both events will expand to a 24-team, single-elimination bracket and will cease all consolation games except for a 3rd place contest.

The current 16 district alignment in both sports will stay in place and all district champions will earn an automatic berth to either Salina, Kan. (women) or Hutchinson, Kan. (men). The additional eight teams will qualify for the national tournament(s) by one of four at-large selections or by District zone-qualification.

Each basketball committee drafted clear policies on how at-large teams would be selected. For zone qualification, the current 16 districts were divided into four zones. Each year one zone, consisting of four districts, will qualify a second team based on criteria determined by each district.

Both 24-team tournaments will be fully seeded per criteria set forth by each respective basketball committee.

DIVISION I MEN'S & WOMEN'S SOCCER

In the sport of soccer, the NJCAA Board of Directors passed the recommendation of the Division I districting committee to expand both the Division I men's & women's soccer championships to 12 participating teams.

On the women's side, the sport will break up into 12 districts where each district winner will earn an automatic berth to the tournament. The men's tournament will run a bit differently as its current eight district format will stay in place. Each year four districts, which will include the district that is serving as the tournament host, will qualify a second team.

FOOTBALL

In an effort to improve the weekly NJCAA Football Poll, the board of directors signed off on a new ranking format that was supported by the football committee. The rankings will now include a computer formula, called the Football Computer Rankings or FCR, which was the result of multiple groups within NJCAA (national headquarters, Region 23, football committee) working together to improve the sport.

Under the new plan the current voting panel of the football poll will expand from seven to nine members. The two additional voters will be head coaches from two randomly selected conferences. Each week the nine voters will submit their rankings to NJCAA Headquarters by a specific date. Upon tabulation, the top and bottom vote for each team will be omitted.

Once the human poll is finalized it will be combined with the FCR calculations. The human poll will make up 66.7 percent of the final rankings while the FCR will make up 33.3 percent.

The FCR will be calculated with the following values: winning percentage (50%), opponents winning percentage (25%), and opponents-opponents winning percentage (25%).

NJCAA