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Publish date: Oct 21, 2010

DIII Council backs resolution on bench size

By Gary Brown
NCAA.org

The Division III Management Council at its October 18-19 meeting recommended that the Presidents Council sponsor a resolution at the 2011 Convention to examine the number of student-athletes in the bench area at Division III championships and to make adjustments if necessary.

The resolution suggests a comprehensive review to identify alternative limits, based on additional research, by July 2011.

The Council's action is intended to address two legislative proposals for this year's Convention from the Empire 8 and the Michigan Intercollegiate Athletic Association that call for institutional discretion in determining and funding the number of additional student-athletes in the bench area at championships.

One (Proposal No. 2011-2-13) would allow institutions in sports other than football to determine how many student-athletes from their current active rosters they desire to dress, participate in warm-ups and be in the bench area. That proposal also garnered co-sponsorship from the Allegheny Mountain Collegiate Conference.

The other (No. 2011-2-12) from the Empire 8 and MIAA includes football but limits the number of student-athletes in the bench area in that sport to 100.

The Management Council voted to oppose both, opting instead for the resolution developed by the Division III Championships Committee, which promises to examine sport-specific logistical concerns, gender-equity considerations, and average squad sizes at championships compared with those among all sponsoring institutions to determine which sports, if any, merit an increase in who is allowed in the bench area.

Policy recommendations emerging from that study could be implemented directly by the governance structure or forwarded to the membership and governance structure at the 2012 Convention.

"Rather than allow for what essentially could be unlimited bench sizes at the discretion of participating institutions, the Council believes that a more focused review is necessary to establish workable limits," said Management Council chair Lynn Oberbillig.

Council members believe the membership-sponsored proposals could apply "undue pressure" on institutions to permit additional student-athletes to travel, with significant expense, at a time when many institutions are facing budget challenges. Consequently, teams that have to fly to a championships site, for instance, are not likely to have the same bench size as the home team or those institutions within driving distance.

Logistics and facility constraints also raise concerns. For example, most baseball and softball dugouts cannot accommodate a significant increase to the current limits.

Council members believe a data-based review is a reasonable approach to address whether increases are warranted in some sports. Those changes could come with increases in the travel party at the division's expense since the NCAA reimburses expenses for the travel party.

Other ancillary benefits are that the expanded number of student-athletes would be included in other aspects of the championship experience, such as the pre-event banquet, distribution of awards and inclusion in the game program.

The resolution, which still must be supported by the Presidents Council, likely would be considered before the two membership-sponsored proposals at the Convention. If approved in San Antonio, it would not render the other two proposals moot. Delegates would still vote on those proposals as submitted.

Other legislation

The Management Council also acted on a proposal regulating event promotions and marketing.



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- » 11/1/10 - DIII Presidents Council elects leaders for next term
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Council members recommended that the Presidents Council withdraw a proposal they previously supported to allow relationships with a professional sports organization or team to market and promote (but not sponsor) NCAA championship events.

The proposal was intended to focus solely on marketing and promotional activities, but more information has emerged about other financial arrangements that are typically associated with various contracts used in the overall championships process. That has prompted a broader examination of the overall championships process before modifying any legislation since the issue extends beyond just marketing and promotional considerations.

Withdrawing the proposal in question (No. 2011-2-6) prompted the Management Council to recommend that the Presidents Council extend a waiver for combined championships (more than one division) to this year's events while the review occurs. The waiver would allow the combined men's lacrosse championships, for example, to use existing promotional efforts (such as mailings to season-ticket holders) and allow divisional championships to function without concern that elements may be contrary to existing legislation if a professional sports entity is involved.

Other highlights

In other action at the October 18-19 Division III Management Council meeting, members:

- Heard a report about ongoing research regarding sickle cell trait in student-athletes. The Management Council had asked the NCAA Committee on Competitive Safeguards and Medical Aspects of Sports this summer to collect more data to inform whether Division III should pursue mandatory testing. The NCAA currently is partnering with experts in the field and surveying schools in all three divisions to assess current screening practices and related cost concerns. The Management Council accepted the committee's plan as satisfactory, noting that continued monitoring remains important.
- Discussed reaction from the Presidents Council and the Presidents Advisory Group to the two-year pilot to study drug education and testing. Because the presidents endorsed a broad approach on substance abuse prevention (including enhanced education, especially regarding alcohol abuse, and funding to support optional local testing for performance-enhancing drugs and street drugs), the Management Council reviewed current educational models the NCAA offers and discussed ways to partner with other areas on campus (for example, student affairs) to make that programming more effective.
- Recommended to the Presidents Council that votes for all proposals at the 2011 Convention be taken using the roll call method, regardless of grouping (presidential or general). Roll-call voting has historically been designated only for the presidential grouping. Since the electronic voting units and technology permit all votes to be recorded quickly, the Council believes that the roll-call method provides transparency for the membership.
- Agreed to withdraw its request to survey current and prospective student-athletes regarding their interest in sand volleyball. The Council cited logistical challenges with such a survey, and members also believe existing data are sufficient to reveal interest in the sport, though concerns have been expressed that the addition of sand volleyball could create a year-round playing season for volleyball student-athletes. This decision does not affect the division's current position to not support sand volleyball as an emerging sport for women at this time.
- Took positions on other NCAA Convention legislative proposals (see [story here](#)). Also approved guidelines for the playing and practice season in men's volleyball in anticipation of the membership adopting the establishment of an NCAA championship in the sport beginning in 2012 (see [story here](#)).

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