

## **Fall Sports Delayed Start Q&A**

In light of the Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference's Board of Directors announcement that fall competition start dates have been delayed (cross country and football beginning on September 26, 2020 & women's soccer and volleyball starting on October 2, 2020) the NSIC has compiled this document to assist student-athletes, coaches, and administrators to answer questions that may arise as student-athletes make decisions about their enrollment and/or athletics participation options for the 2020-21 academic year. This document will be updated as additional questions or issues arise and as additional guidance is received from NCAA staff. Please consult with campus Athletic Department leadership for additional details.

### **Why was this decision made?**

The health and safety of our student-athletes, athletics personnel and greater campus communities is paramount. Given the information from the medical and scientific community, and the number of uncertainties and limitations involving local and state regulations and various campus and state travel restrictions, it has become evident that we need to delay our original start dates to provide our membership the opportunity to be prepared for all student-athletes to return to campus and work through all of the requirements for resocialization. Therefore, we believe the most responsible course of action is to proactively make an informed decision to delay the start of practices and competitions and to do so before student-athletes would have returned for regularly scheduled preseason practice. Our student-athletes deserve an experience that provides the best possible opportunity to participate in their chosen fall sport in hopes to successfully complete the season.

### **Why was this decision made now and not closer to the start of the semester?**

Making this decision now permits our campuses to focus solely on reopening safely for their broader university communities. We believe that the challenge of preparing for a fall sports season amidst the present uncertainties should not affect overall institutional reopening plans nor the health and safety of the wider campus community. Data from other institutions across the country illustrates some of the complications (e.g., travel restrictions, shutdown of voluntary workouts, quarantine of several team members) around the operational challenges but also reflects the uncontained nature of the virus and the ensuing health and safety concerns. Based on these observations, we believe now is the right time to provide clarity to our student-athletes so we can turn our efforts towards helping institutions reopen and ensuring all of our student-athletes safely return to campus to start the academic year.

### **Why is competition being delayed and not postponed or canceled?**

Athletics is a vital aspect of all 16 of our campus communities and we owe it to our student-athletes to exhaust all options that will result in an opportunity for them to compete in their sport. We are optimistic that remedies to manage the virus and minimize spread will improve over time which would provide a more consistent season and positive experience for our student-athletes. Although we are not able to guarantee this given the uncertain nature of the virus, we are committed to exploring all options.

### **Did NCAA Championships factor into the decision-making process?**

We recognize the value an NCAA championship experience is for our student-athletes and that was a factor in the analysis, but this is a health and safety issue and those concerns will always prevail in our decision. As it presently stands, NCAA fall championships remain as scheduled, therefore, our member institutions would continue to have the opportunity to be selected based on our current delayed start date. It is premature at this point to speculate, but if NCAA championships are shifted, it will certainly be a consideration as we develop alternative competitive formats for our membership.

**Will this affect the athletics aid agreement for any fall sport student-athletes (M/W Cross Country, Football, W. Soccer and Volleyball)?**

No. Institutions shall not reduce or cancel a fall sport student-athlete’s athletics aid based solely on the postponement of competition this fall, including incoming first-year student-athletes. A reduction or cancellation of athletics aid must follow NCAA Bylaw 15.5.4.1. Any student-athlete who chooses to not enroll, or enrolls part-time, cannot receive athletics aid during that semester.

**How will this affect any NCAA eligibility matters?**

Any amount of competition by a student-athlete constitutes the use of a season of competition per bylaw 14.2.4.1. *Please see additional Q&A for detailed compliance questions at [www.northernsun.org/CCFAQ](http://www.northernsun.org/CCFAQ).*

**How will the conference and its members support student-athletes impacted by this decision?**

We recognize the impact this decision will have on our student-athletes, particularly on their mental health. We will work with our members to ensure we are providing adequate support to our student-athletes in this regard. As we often do, we will also utilize our conference Student-Athlete Advisory Committee as a sounding board and solicit direct feedback from them on resources that could help. Our Green Bandana initiative prioritizes the mental health of Northern Sun student-athletes and that will certainly continue to be the case through this difficult time.

**When will fall sports be able to begin in-season practices?**

Once an institution begins classes in the fall, all fall sports are required to abide by out-of-season countable athletic related activity legislation as stated in NCAA Bylaw 17.1.6.3.1(c) [VB, Soc, XC] and 17.1.6.3.2 [FB]. Fall sports are provided 24 calendar days for permissible, championship segment practice prior to their first permissible contest.

Golf-sponsoring institutions that declare the fall semester as their championship season are to abide by these fall practice and competition requirements.

Institutions may begin their championship segment practices starting on the dates prescribed below:

<u>Sport</u>	<u>Days Between First Practice and First Contest</u>		
	<u>First Permissible Practice</u>	<u>First Permissible Contest</u>	<u>Contest</u>
Cross Country	2-Sept	26-Sept	24
Football	2-Sept	26-Sept	24
Soccer	8-Sept	2-Oct	24
Volleyball	8-Sept	2-Oct	24
Golf	2-Sept	26-Sept	24

Beginning on the first permissible practice date, institutions must abide by in-season, countable athletic related activity legislation (e.g., 20 hours/week, 1 day off/week). (NCAA Bylaw 17.1.6.1)

**What might a competition schedule for fall sports look like?**

In collaboration with our membership, competitive conference only sport schedules have been developed for football, women’s soccer, and volleyball. The schedules end the conference season and transition into the traditional NCAA post season competition dates. Additionally, the schedules meet NCAA minimum number of contests necessary for selections and sports sponsorship. *The updated schedules can be found at [www.northernsun.org/2020FallSchedules](http://www.northernsun.org/2020FallSchedules).*

**Will spring sports be permitted to participate in practice and competition during their non-championship fall segment?**

Yes. Spring sports are permitted to begin their non-championship segment as prescribed under their respective Bylaw 17 requirements. However, spring sports may not engage in outside competition during their non-championship segment until September 26th. The September 26 date ensures that outside competition is consistent for all sports throughout the entire conference.

**When will winter sports be permitted to begin countable athletic related activities?**

Winter sports are permitted to begin out-of-season countable athletic related activities beginning on September 7 or the institution's fourth day of classes, whichever is earlier (NCAA Bylaw 17.1.6.3.1(a)). Institutions may begin their in-season countable activities as permitted under each sport's respective Bylaw 17 legislation.

**Is a decision on winter sports being made at this time?**

No. Our plan now is to begin winter sports on time as scheduled. Consistent with our decision-making process and the timeline upon which decisions were made for fall sports, any decisions that may impact winter sports, will occur in the fall. We are optimistic that continued understanding of the virus by medical professionals and advancements regarding aspects of medical protocols (e.g., testing, contact tracing, surveillance) will develop and be available prior to the start of the winter sport season.

**When will student-athletes arrive on campus?**

Student-athletes will report to campus on a timeline consistent with the rest of the student body, unless the first practice date as identified by their institution precedes the institution's timeline for the rest of the student population. Student-athletes may continue to participate in permissible voluntary workouts at each institution's discretion. Please contact your athletic department for specific dates on returning to campus.