Softball Guidelines 2019
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GENERAL PLAYING GUIDELINES

- **Scheduling/Support Guidelines**

  - **Start times/Scheduling:**
    - Start times for mid-week, weekday doubleheaders are recommended to begin no earlier than 3:00 p.m.
    - Start times for all weekend games should be no earlier than 1:00 p.m. and no later than 3:00 p.m. on Saturday and no earlier, nor later than 12:00 p.m. on Sunday unless mutually agreed upon by all institutions involved in weekend play.
    - Each team shall play each other twice per season in a doubleheader, alternating home and away sites every year.
    - NCAA guidelines for extra innings will apply.

  - **Back-to-back games:**
    - Host team should wear their home (white) uniforms on the first day of competition and their away (dark) on the second day of competition of back-to-back play.

  - **Cancellations/Rescheduling:**
    - Conference members must make conference games their first priority at all times. All cancelled games should be made up if at all possible.
    - All changes must be communicated to the conference office.
    - **The conference commissioner has the authority (in consultation with the executive committee) to adjust conference schedules in order to ensure the completion of regular season games.**
    - When weather dictates schedule changes for back-to-back conference play, all teams involved in that weekend should be consulted.
    - In the event that a contest is moved due to unplayable field conditions, the original host will remain the home team, regardless of the new location (i.e. neutral field, opponent’s field).
    - As permitted by 6.17.1, all NAC Conference games will utilize the halted game rule when a contest is in progress and cannot be completed that day. The NCAA rule states:

  **6.17 Halted Game:**

  - A halted game shall be declared by the plate umpire if play must be temporarily suspended with the intent that it will be continued at some later time or date. Before the restart of a halted game, the plate umpire shall conduct a pregame meeting to verify the lineup information remains correct (for example, note uniform number changes necessitated by a change in jerseys, personnel no longer available, etc.). When play resumes after having been temporarily suspended, it must start at exactly the point of it being halted. The lineups and batting orders of both teams must be exactly the same as they were, subject to the rules of substitution, and any player who played or was announced as a substitute before the game was halted, must be in the lineup when play resumes or be ineligible for the remainder of the game.
  - Every effort should be made to continue the game with the plate umpire’s lineup cards.

  **6.17.2**
• Whether the halted-game rule will be used must be determined at the pregame meeting. Use of the halted-game rule also can be determined by conference ruling or tournament policy.

6.17.3
• During the regular season, if a game is both halted and regulation, regulation will take precedence assuming the reasonable efforts made to complete the game have failed.
  o Travel Support:
    ▪ Lodging - The host institution shall assist all NAC institutions by providing a list of hotel accommodations in the area.
  o Conference Scouting Policy:
    ▪ It is permissible to share scouting information on conference members with other conference members. It is impermissible to share information beyond video on conference members with non-conference institutions.

• Home Team Responsibilities
  o Setting competition times/sites-i.e. if a venue is not playable, if there are two games, etc.
  o Providing a field that meets minimum NCAA regulation standards.
  o Providing a certified athletic trainer at each contest.
    ▪ All visiting teams must provide their own training supplies.
  o Providing game personnel including: 2 umpires, official scorer, statistics keeper/crew, ball persons, crowd control, grounds crew, etc.
  o Providing event programs including at minimum the lineups for each team.
  o Providing locker rooms for the visiting team at all games.
  o All home games should be supervised by an athletic administrator/site director who is responsible for sportsmanship/behavior of fans.
  o At off-campus venues, the home team is responsible for having a game administrator present at least one hour prior to the contest to greet the visiting team.
  o Announcing the following NCAA sportsmanship advisory prior to each game:

The NCAA, (competing institution names), and the North Atlantic Conference promote good sportsmanship by the student-athletes, coaches and spectators at today’s/tonight’s contest. We request your cooperation by supporting the participants and officials in a positive manner. Profanity, racial or sexist comments, or other intimidating actions directed at officials, student-athletes, coaches or team representatives will not be tolerated and are grounds for removal from (site of competition). Any spectators that enter the playing area during a contest, will be removed from (site of competition).
• **Official Conference Ball**
  - Rawlings NC 12L - Yellow
  - Beginning in 2011, a ball adoption agreement with Worth has been signed by the conference. Rawlings bought Worth in 2017 – the ball is the same.
  - The agreement includes a free bucket of practice balls (per institution/per year) when game balls are ordered.

• **Awards**
  - It is the responsibility of each institution to submit nominations for their student-athletes for weekly (SID’s) and annual awards (coaches) through the NAC website.
  - Weekly awards will begin the Monday following the first week of competition in which at least half of the member schools have competed. Weekly honors will conclude the Monday following the NAC Championship. Weekly nominations are due Monday at 10:00 a.m. and winners will be selected by the conference staff. The following weekly awards will be selected for Softball:
    - Player of the Week
    - Pitcher of the Week
    - Rookie of the Week
  - Nominations for annual awards will be submitted following the conclusion of regular season conference play. Annual awards will be selected through a vote by conference coaches and will be announced no later than the Thursday before the NAC Championship. Softball will select the following annual awards:
    - Player of the Year
    - Pitcher of the Year
    - Rookie of the Year
    - Coach of the Year
    - Sportmanship Team
    - Senior Scholar Athlete of the Year
    - All-Conference First and Second Team
  - **All-Conference First and Second Team**
    - The top pitcher, top catcher, top four infielders, top designated player, and top three outfielders will be named to the first team. A second team consisting of the next nine leading vote-getters will also be named.
    - Coaches may nominate up to SIX players from their own team regardless of position using the All-Conference Team form. Only Conference statistics will be included on the ballot.
  - **Regional and National Award Voting**
    - Coaches are strongly encouraged to become members of their respective coaching groups and to nominate worthy players and teams for award consideration. Participation in the voting process is strongly encouraged to increase the potential for the recognition of NAC student-athletes on the regional and national stages.
• **Sports Information**
  - Maintaining an accurate schedule, including non-conference contests and notifying the conference office when there are postponements and cancelations.
  - Maintaining an accurate stat roster on the NAC website.
  - Submitting the score of all home contests and away non-conference contests to the Conference through the NAC website as soon as contests are complete.
  - Sending packed stat game file to the visitor and uploading the file to both the NAC website and the NCAA statistics and score reporting site following the contest.
  - Submitting nominations for weekly honors and recaps through the NAC website. Assisting with annual award nominations and votes.
At the direction of the North Atlantic Conference Presidents and with the support of the Directors of Athletics, the conference embraces the theme “Creating an Atmosphere of Respect” for each of our sports. The ultimate goal for the NAC is to create an atmosphere that places the highest regard for exemplary behavior of all participants, coaches, administrators, fans and officials. As a means to move to this end, the NAC initiative was created and is comprised of the following primary elements:

Behavioral Objectives for “Creating an atmosphere of respect” Initiative

- Softball coaches will engage in the process of “Creating an atmosphere of respect” by agreeing to basic behaviors that will be expected of all conference members. In turn, they will share this information with their respective teams and set the highest expectations for achieving program objectives.
- All conference members will show respect for opponents, teammates, coaches, officials, and the game.
- Coaches will set a positive tone for their teams, exhibiting and expecting integrity and appropriate behavior.
- Conference members will establish high expectations for all remembering that all individuals must represent their team, institution and conference well.
- Coaches will interact with game officials in a respectful manner.
- Coaches will address issues regarding appropriate bench behavior and will support a positive environment for each contest.
- A conference pre-game protocol was accepted. A pre-game handshake at home plate between respective Head Coaches and team Captains or representatives, will serve as a symbolic gesture for creating the desired atmosphere.
- Following each NAC Conference Series, visiting coaches and event managers will have the option to provide feedback on the behavior of other coaches, student-athletes and fans through the use of an evaluation tool aimed not at punitive action but on the enhancement of all NAC programs. To access the online form, go to www.nacathletics.com, select Inside the NAC and from Member Services, click on Contest Feedback form. The Commissioner will follow up with appropriate individuals on all feedback submitted.

NAC Expectations for Good Sportsmanship (from NAC Bylaws):

- Observing and supporting the rules of the game.
- Promoting the spirit as well as the letter of the rules.
- Placing fairness first as a goal in all competition.
- Taking personal responsibility for high standards of play and conduct.
- Showing civility toward competitors, coaches and officials.
- Playing cleanly while playing hard.
- Showing maturity and integrity in conduct on and off the field of play.
- Being a gracious competitor and accepting both wins and losses with dignity.

We all benefit by “Creating an Atmosphere of Respect.”
CHAMPIONSHIP GUIDELINES

• 2019 North Atlantic Conference Championship Dates and Format
  o **Coaches Chair**: Kat McKay, UMaine-Farmington
  o **Coaches Vice Chair**: TBD
  o **Sport Liaison**: Cyndi Pratt, UMaine-Farmington
  o **Last play date**: Monday, April 29, 2019
  o Seeding will take place following the completion of all conference contests and will be announced on the Conference website.
  o Format will be as follows:
    ▪ Top FOUR teams qualify for the double-elimination tournament hosted by the No. 1 seed.
    ▪ Played on Friday, Saturday and Sunday (if necessary), May 3 - 5, 2019

• Championship Game Times
  o Three-Day, Double-Elimination:

    **Friday, May 3, 2019**
    Game 1       #1 v #4       10:00 a.m.
    Game 2       #2 v #3       12:00 p.m.
    Game 3       Loser Game 1 v Loser Game 2   2:00 p.m.
    Game 4       Winner Game 1 v Winner Game 2   4:00 p.m.

    **Saturday, May 4, 2019**
    Game 5       Winner Game 3 v Loser Game 4   12:00 p.m.
    Game 6       Winner Game 4 v Winner Game 5   2:00 p.m.

    **Sunday, May 5, 2019** (if necessary)
    Game 7       Final two teams    1:00 p.m.

*Note: If Game 7 is necessary, the teams will reverse home and away designation from Game 6 regardless of the below home team guidelines, but remain in the same dugout and uniforms.*

  ▪ Host of Final Four, will retain 3 umpires for all games during the double-elimination portion of the tournament (updated 11/12/08).
  ▪ Game times listed for Championships are preferred. In cases where a disagreement occurs between the competing institutions, or when both institutions would like to schedule outside of the preferred game times, an Ad Hoc Committee will convene to make a determination. The committee will include Championship Chairperson, Commissioner, and Sport Liaison (unless the Sport Liaison is from one of the institutions competing, then another Administrator will be selected by the Commissioner).

  o Rain Contingency:
    ▪ If the Tournament is cancelled prior to beginning, the highest seed will receive the AQ.
If at any point the conference tournament is cancelled and cannot be completed the following procedures will be followed in determining the conference automatic qualifier into the NCAA tournament:

- If between 0 and 2 games are completed, the highest seed will be the AQ recipient.
- If between 3 and 5 games are completed, the highest undefeated seed will be the AQ recipient.
- If 6 games are played, the winner of Game 6 will be the AQ recipient.
- If game 7 has been halted, but reached regulation (4 ½ or 5 innings), the winner would be the team leading at the point of the final full inning completed (e.g. if the 5th, 6th or 7th inning has started but is not completed, the score reverts back to the last completed full inning).
- If no play has begun by the end of Saturday, the tournament will revert to a four team single elimination tournament on Sunday. Pairings would be 1 vs 4, 2 vs 3 and the championship game to follow with times open due to field/weather.

Home Team Determination:

- **Game 1 and Game 2:** the higher seed shall be designated the home team.
- **Games 3, 4 and 5:**
  - The institution that has been the home team the fewer number of times.
  - If the two teams are equal in this respect, but unequal in the number of times they were the visitor, then the team that has been the visitor more often shall be designated the home team.
  - If the two teams are equal in the number of times that they have been home and visitor, the following procedures shall be observed:
    - If the two teams have met previously, the visitor in the previous game shall be the home team in the game in question.
    - The team that was visitor in its preceding game shall be the home team, unless both teams were visitors in their preceding games.
    - Coin flip.
- **Game 6:** the undefeated team shall be designated the home team.
- **Game 7:** the teams will reverse home and away designation from Game 6 but will remain in the same dugout and uniforms.
• Hosting
  o Higher seeds in all rounds of Championship play have the opportunity to host, if they meet the following criteria:
    ▪ Field must meet minimum NAC Standards.
    ▪ Skinned infield.
    ▪ 25 feet (30 max) from home plate to the backstop.
    ▪ The sideline fence, the outfield fence and the backstop must completely enclose the playing field.
    ▪ Outfield fence should be a minimum of 190 and maximum of 220 feet. A breakaway fence is acceptable.
    ▪ Bench capacity for 24.
    ▪ If there are two games back-to-back, the teams playing the second game must have access to a warm-up area.
    ▪ Adequate Parking.
    ▪ Adequate Security and Crowd Control.
    ▪ Official scorer’s table on the sideline.
    ▪ Visible score board.
    ▪ At least 2 NCAA regulation game balls/game must be provided by host institution.
    ▪ Adequate and trained statistics crew.
  o Institutions should meet all guidelines to host conference championships.
  o Any institution that does not exactly meet the standards, but wishes to host, may submit a request with Intent to Host form to the Commissioner for consideration at the August meeting of the Athletic Directors Council.
  o Host institution may request permission to use off-site facility within approximately 90 minutes from their campus or located between host school and opponent, to meet host requirements for championship play (March 2018).
  o If higher seed is unable to meet the above hosting criteria, the next highest seed will have the opportunity to host.

• Coaches Meeting
  o Coaches will participate in a Pre-Tournament teleconference on Tuesday, April 30, 2019, at 10:00 a.m. (tentative). The Sport Liaison and Conference Commissioner will facilitate this meeting. All coaches are invited to participate; attendance is mandatory for coaches of teams participating in the tournament. When there is a conflict with a scheduled contest, the Athletic Director or another institutional representative may serve as a substitute for the coach.
  o A Conference call of all coaches will be scheduled following the season at which point softball issues and ideas will be discussed. The Sport Chairperson will be responsible for scheduling the call and will work with the conference office on the call agenda.
  o For all sport conference calls, all future Agenda items must be submitted two weeks prior to call so that these can be distributed to all coaches and AD’s prior to conference call. (November 2010)
• **Seeding/Format**
  - The Conference Commissioner and Associate Commissioner will seed teams following the last NAC competition date using results provided by the institution through the Conference website. Tiebreaking results will be shared with the Sport Liaison, Sport Chair and Championships Chair. The following criteria will be used to seed teams:
    - Conference winning percentage - must have completed 2/3 of conference games to be eligible. Contests against institutions failing to meet this requirement will not be counted as conference contests for purposes of seeding.
  - In case of a tie, the following tie-break procedures will be followed:
    - Head-to-head result (two-way tie).
    - In ties among three or more schools or when head-to-head results between two team are equal, the following criteria will be applied, in order, until a team is (or teams are) separated. At that point, the process begins anew, (returning to the first criteria) with the remaining teams.
      - Best record among tied teams. The conference will only examine records of tied teams in contests with each other.
      - Comparison of results against conference opponents one team at a time starting with the highest ranked team and continuing in downward rank order until the tie is broken.
      - Comparison of results against non-conference common opponents. During this step, non-conference games with conference opponents will not be considered.
      - Comparison of winning percentage vs. NCAA Division III opponents with .500+ winning. (added 3/2009)
      - Overall winning percentage.
      - Coin toss.

• **Uniforms**
  - The team designated as the home team for each contest will wear home uniforms.
  - Color of uniforms may be changed to accommodate teams playing back-to-back if agreed upon by both coaches.

• **Umpires**
  - It is the responsibility of the host institution to secure and pay 3 umpires for all games of the double elimination tournament.
  - The same officiating crews should not be used for more than two games during the championship with the home plate umpire rotating after game 1.
  - Every effort should be made to ensure that no individual umpire is behind the plate for more than one game during the entire tournament. However, the tournament director (in consultation with NAC staff on site) retains the authority to approve an exception based on the available supply of quality
umpires. Exception would only be made for the “if necessary” championship game.

- **Pre-game announcement**
  
  The standard conference announcement regarding good sportsmanship (see page 4) must be read before each game.

- **Athletic Training**
  
  - Certified on-site training personnel must be available one and a half hours before game time and one half hour post-game.
  - Supplies to be provided by each institution.
  - Access to emergency transport required.

- **Locker rooms**
  
  - Must accommodate two teams per game.
  - If only two are available, game times should reflect needs.
  - Chalk Talk board should be available for each team.

- **Bathroom Facilities**
  
  - Must be adequate, in close proximity to playing venue, and meet ADA requirements.

- **Contest Management**
  
  - Site Director
  - Security/crowd control
  - Stat Crew personnel
  - Official scorer
  - Official scoreboard operator
  - PA announcer
  - Ball persons
  - Staff or student hosts to show teams to locker rooms and other parts of the athletic facility.

- **Game Program Contents**
  
  Game programs should include:
  - Name of all Competing institutions
  - Complete roster of teams participating at specific site
  - Institutional synopsis of participating teams
  - NAC history/information, etc.
  - Previous year’s tournament information including the previous sports champions
  - NAC/NCAA Sportsmanship expectations
  - NAC logo
  - Institutions’ logos
  - Award Guys logo (sponsor)
  - Worth logo (sponsor)
• **Championship Awards**
  - Awards must be presented by a Conference Representative, the Sport Liaison, the Athletic Director of host institution or other host institution representative. A script will be distributed to the host for awards ceremony.
  - Awards will be presented after championship contest. All-Tournament team members from previous games should be mentioned during the presentation.
  - Awards should be displayed prior to championship game if possible.
  - It is the responsibility of the conference office to order awards and to have them delivered to the host institution in a timely manner.
  - All-Tournament Team will be named for each championship and each honoree will be recognized at the championship presentation (11 selections total):
    - 3rd and 4th place teams will receive two selections
    - Runner-up will receive three selections
    - Champion will receive three selections, plus an MVP selection

• **Host site SID/Site director**
  - Entering contests into NAC Scoreboard and confirm game times.
  - Providing programs for all tournament contests.
  - Maintaining in contest scores on the NAC website.
  - Providing updates on social media platforms using institution and conference handles and conference hashtags.
  - Submitting the final score to the Conference through the NAC website.
  - Sending packed stat game file to the visitor and uploading the file to the NAC website following the contest.
  - Share neutral game summary and box score with opponent, conference office and media outlets following all hosted contests (media outlets must be provided to host institution in advance).
  - Taking a digital Championship Team Photo and sending it to the conference office with the neutral contest story. Photo should also be shared with championship team.

• **Protests**
  - All protests will be handled in accordance with NCAA Regulations.

• **Extra Innings**
  - Follow NCAA rules. These rules are to be discussed in the mandatory pre-game meeting with officials, head coaches and host administrator.

• **Weather**
  - If inclement weather occurs and games cannot be rescheduled please review the “Rain Contingency” on page 9.
  - The decision to postpone or cancel must be made by Host AD, traveling AD and conference commissioner.
- A rain or snow date will be built into the championship dates, should inclement weather continue, the top seed will be declared the conference champion for the NCAA selections of the AQs.

- The home team must certify that their field or one within approximately 90 minutes of their campus will be playable throughout the tournament. If weather precludes play on the scheduled dates, games may be moved to the next day or any subsequent days provided the institution can certify the field will be playable and the NCAA deadline for submission of the AQ will be met. The host must secure a backup site that is playable prior to the deadline for the submission of the AQ or the game/s will be moved to an opponent’s site, starting with the site of the #2 seed. (January 2018)

- The halted game will NOT be in effect during the NAC tournament, though as stated above with the NCAA halted game rule 6.17.2 Use of the halted-game rule also can be determined by conference ruling or tournament policy.

- **Tickets/Concessions**
  - Ticket sales and concessions are optional.
  - If a gate is charged, institutions are permitted to charge the same prices they utilized during the regular season.
  - If a gate is being charged, all institutions must be notified in advance and complementary tickets for each tournament participant must be provided.
  - Number of complementary tickets will be limited to two institutional representatives and two/roster members.
APPENDIX A

Cold Weather Best Practice

In the interest of health and safety for student-athletes, coaches, athletics staff, and spectators, the NAC has instituted cold weather best practices to prevent cold weather-related injuries and illnesses to all participants. These recommendations are in accordance with the National Athletic Trainers’ Association and the guidelines set forth by the NCAA. The athletic training staffs of the NAC institutions have conferred and agreed upon these standards.

These best practices are to be enforced in instances of conference competitions only. This best practice is not intended to override any school’s practice policy.

The following best practices pertain to “Active” sports (Men’s and Women’s Lacrosse, Men’s and Women’s Soccer, and Field Hockey) and “Limited Activity” sports (Baseball, Softball, Men’s and Women’s Track & Field, Men’s and Women’s Tennis, Men’s and Women’s Cross Country, and Men’s Golf).

The concern for student athletes that participate in Limited Activity sports is the student-athlete will be exposed to wind and cold temperatures during long periods of inactivity. During these times, student athletes may have difficulty maintaining proper body temperature due to exposure and lack of metabolic activity, thus, additional considerations are to be made to protect those student-athletes.

All temperatures indicated below are to represent the Wind Chill Temperature. The effects of the wind are to be taken into account. Ideally, the on-field conditions are to be used to determine the participation status. Furthermore, whenever possible, indoor warming facilities are to be made available to participants and spectators. When indoor warming facilities are not available, postponement is required at the previous step.

Cold Weather Best Practice for “Limited Activity” Sports

>40 degrees F – No restrictions on activities are required. Advisement is to be given to coaches to the temperature. Maintain regular hydration breaks.

32-40 degrees F – Recommend skin coverage for all athletes including gloves, hats, long sleeves, and leggings/pants. Monitor for cold weather injuries and have indoor facilities available for rewarming if needed.

25-32 degrees F – Required skin coverage as described above. Indoor rewarming should be available. For timed events, allow indoor rewarming for no less than 15 minutes following on field warmups and during halftime. For non-timed events, allow indoor rewarming for no less than 15 minutes during the first stoppage of play after 45 minutes of activity. *If no indoor rewarming facilities are available, activities are to be postponed at <32 degrees F

<25 degrees F – Postponement of athletic contests are required.