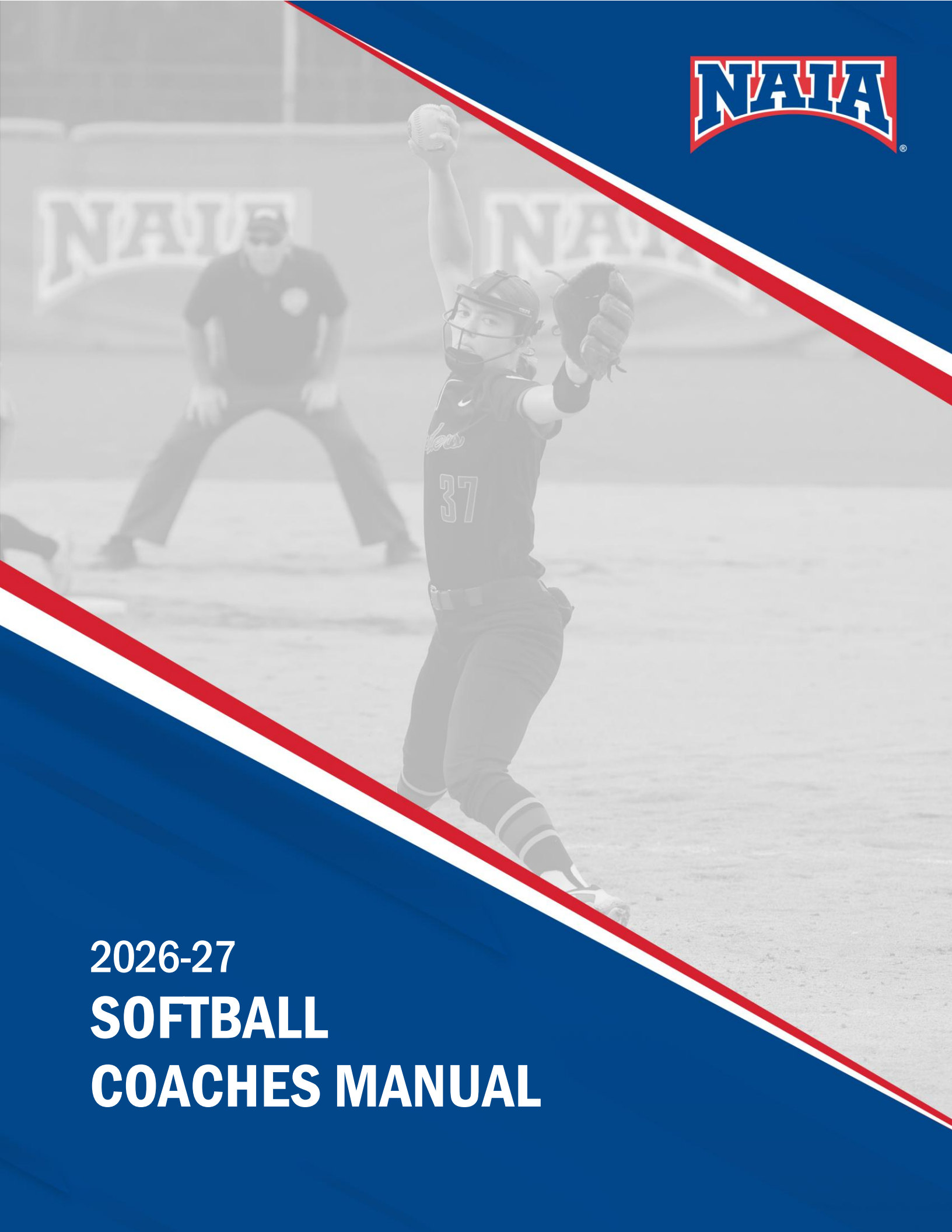




2026-27
SOFTBALL
COACHES MANUAL

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SOFTBALL IMPORTANT DATES

2026-27 SOFTBALL SPORT CALENDAR

SEPTEMBER 1 (or start date of institution's Fall term, whichever is earlier)	START – First Allowable Date for Practices, Fall Competitions
NOVEMBER 4	START – National Coaches Polls <i>Dates: Nov. 4, Mar. 3, Mar. 17, Mar. 31, Apr. 14, Apr. 28, May 11, and Jun. 9</i>
NOVEMBER 17	DEADLINE – Submission of Sport Motions
DECEMBER 9-12	NFCA Convention – Atlantic City, NJ
JANUARY 15	DEADLINE – Facility Certification for Opening Rounds
JANUARY 28	START – First Allowable Date for Competitions
FEBRUARY 2	START – NAIA National Player of the Week <i>Dates: Feb. 2, Feb. 9, Feb. 16, Feb. 23, March 2, March 9, March 16, March 23, March 30, April 6, April 13, & April 20</i>
MARCH 22	START – Area Rating Committee Ranking Releases <i>Dates: Mar. 22, Apr. 5, Apr. 19, and May 4</i>
MARCH 22	START – National Selection Committee Polls Release <i>Dates: Mar. 22, Apr. 5, Apr. 19, and June 9</i>
APRIL 15	DEADLINE – Submit Individual Champion of Character Nomination
APRIL 15	DEADLINE – Submitting Bid Packet for Opening Rounds
APRIL 15	DEADLINE – Nominations for NAIA Scholar-Athlete
APRIL 30	RELEASE – Opening Round Host Sites Announced
MAY 5	RELEASE – National Championship Qualifiers NAIA YouTube
MAY 6	DEADLINE – Submitting All-Conference/CAC/Group Team ballots to National Office
MAY 10	DEADLINE – Completion of Conference/CAC/Unaffiliated tournaments
MAY 17-20	NAIA Softball National Championship Opening Rounds <i>8 Campus Sites</i>
MAY 27-June 2	NAIA Softball World Series
JUNE 1	RELEASE – All-American, Pitcher of the Year, & Player of the Year honors
JUNE 11	RELEASE – Coach of the Year
JUNE 30	DEADLINE – Nominations for NAIA Scholar Teams Due
JULY 15	DEADLINE – Nominations for NAIA Hall of Fame Due

FIVE-YEAR CHAMPIONSHIP CALENDAR

	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031
Conference Tournament Deadline	May 10	May 8	May 7	May 6	May 5
Opening Round	May 17-20	May 15-18	May 14-17	May 13-16	May 12-15
World Series	May 27 – June 2	May 25 – 31	May 24 – 30	May 24 – June 1	May 22 – 28

National Championship Website – [Click Here](#)

PLAYING RULES AND REGULATIONS

PLAYING RULES

The [official rules](#) used to govern all NAIA-affiliated fast-pitch programs (including regular season, conference/Continental Athletic Conference (CAC) (formerly the Association of Independent Institutions)/unaffiliated group tournaments and World Series) are the official rules of National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) with the following modifications approved by the NAIA-SCA:

1. **Outfield Fence Distance-** Outfield fence distance shall be 190-225 feet with the recommendation of 200 feet down the lines and 225 in centerfield for all NAIA conference/CAC/unaffiliated group and world series competition. (For all new construction, the fence distance is required to be 200 feet in left and right fields.)
Minimum Softball Field Dimensions to host a NAIA Softball Opening Round:
Left/Right Field: 190 feet
Center Field: 210 feet
2. There shall be no time limit or tiebreaker rule used during NAIA postseason play. It may be used during the regular season.
3. The NAIA will adhere to the NCAA approved bat list found [HERE](#).

Official rulebooks can be downloaded or purchased through the NCAA website [HERE](#).

GAME UMPIRES

The Affiliated Conference/CAC/Unaffiliated Group Commissioner shall assign umpires for Affiliated Conference/CAC/Unaffiliated Group tournament games. Compensation is the responsibility of the host institution or Affiliated Conference/CAC/Unaffiliated Group.

OFFICIAL BALL

The official ball for all NAIA conference/CAC/unaffiliated group and World Series competition is the Rawlings NAIAFB (.47 core). NAIA will provide Rawlings softballs, with the appropriate NAIA logo for exclusive use in each conference/CAC/unaffiliated group tournament game. The NAIA strongly recommends the use of the Rawlings NAIAFB (max. 275-375 lbs. compression) for all regular season play.

SEASON RECORDS

Win-loss records for all member institutions participating in softball shall include ONLY those games played against a varsity program from an accredited, upper-level, degree-granting institution, and SHALL NOT include games against junior colleges, clubs, foreign (Canada excluded) or military teams.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE/TOBACCO POLICY

The use of alcohol, tobacco or tobacco products is not permitted by participants, coaches, cheerleaders, trainers, game administrators, or officials in the playing areas during all NAIA sanctioned competition and practices for such competition. The institution's coaching staff, event games committee, administrator or host site coordinator (as applicable) shall enforce this policy through the following steps: On the first offense, the individual(s) and team shall receive an official warning; A second offense will cause expulsion from the practice, game, tournament or event. Member institutions are strongly encouraged to adopt this policy for all regular season practice and competition.

CONDUCT IN COMPETITION

EJECTIONS AND SUSPENSIONS

An ejection is an action enforced in conjunction with competition by a game umpire consistent with the playing rules in that sport. Ejections are not subject to appeal. Some sport rules allow protests through an official process outlined in each sport rule book.

Ejection reports must be completed by the NAIA game official ejecting a student-athlete or coach. The form must be submitted to the NAIA within 48 hours after the completion of the contest.

[Ejection Report Form](#)

In the NAIA, any ejection in any sport carries a mandatory suspension of at least one game (see NAIA Bylaws Article VI, Section B, Item 7). In addition, the specific sport itself may also carry a suspension, as determined by rules of competition for that sport. If both an NAIA and sport rule suspension apply, the two suspensions run concurrently.

If a suspension is mandated by an NAIA bylaw it may be appealed starting with the Conference/CAC Commissioner. An institution must submit an appeal to their conference within 72 hours of the completion of contest. The conference will submit a recommendation to the NAIA within 72 hours of receiving the appeal from the institution. The Conduct and Ethics Committee is responsible for all appeals related to suspensions due to ejections of a coach and/or student-athlete.

Once an appeal with appropriate signatures has been submitted to the conference, the student-athlete/coach may continue to participate through the appeal process. If the appeal is not approved, then the student-athlete/coach must sit out of the next scheduled contest(s).

A suspended person cannot be in the competition venue the day of the contest or communicate with any team personnel or game umpires the day of the contest. The student-athlete/coach will be normally removed from the venue during a suspension. However, the game manager will use their best discretion on what is appropriate to risk management procedures regarding their venue.

Softball sport rule: An ejected player may remain in the dugout but shall not remain on the playing field or communicate with opponents or umpires. Ejected nonplaying personnel must leave the playing field, dugout and other team areas and be out of sight and sound. Out of sight and sound means unable to view the remainder of the contest and the umpires cannot hear any additional comments. In either case, they shall not communicate (visually, electronically or verbally) further with the teams or umpires.

Note: Suspended student-athletes shall not be in uniform, shall not be allowed in any team area from the time umpires enter the field until after they leave the field, and shall not perform any team duty while serving a suspension. Suspended coaches and other non-playing personnel shall not communicate with any umpire or be in the playing facility once pregame activities have started until the umpires leave the field of play at the conclusion of the game(s). Exception: Players suspended under Rule 13.3 may be restricted to the dugout if the suspension is to be served while the team is on the road and no other suitable supervisory options are available.

Once an appeal with appropriate signatures has been submitted to the conference, the student-athlete/coach may continue to participate through the appeal process. If the appeal is not approved, then the student-athlete/coach must sit out of the next scheduled contest(s).

POSTSEASON COMPETITION

RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS

CREDENTIAL INFORMATION

Medical Personnel - Each team is allowed up to two athletic training/medical personnel on the team sideline. One of which must be an ATC, MD, or DO. A licensed health care provider's license information/number must be submitted in the application in order to receive any medical/athletic training credentials for your team. Applications will close 72 hours before the event starts. Medical personnel credentials can be picked up during team check-in/registration only with a photo ID.

[Please apply here for medical personnel credential.](#)

(Applications required for Final Site play only)

Sports Information / Media Personnel - All SIDs/Media personnel will need to apply for a credential for the final site. Applications will close 72 hours before the event starts. Media Credentials can be picked up at the box office only with photo ID. Media credentials will NOT be included in the team packets at coaches pick up. Please ensure that SID's and media fill out the appropriate form.

[Final Site Media Credential Application](#)

Administrator Personnel - All Presidents and Athletic Directors from qualifying teams will each receive two credentials. These credentials can be picked up at the box office. All other administrators will receive free admission with their NAIA membership card when presented at the box office.

ROSTERS/OFFICIAL PARTY

The official party for each team participating in postseason play is 27 which includes 22 student-athletes, and up to 5 support staff.

Official Postseason Roster forms will now be filled out via NAIA Connect (<https://www.naiiaconnect.org/s/login>) and sent to the NAIA National Office. If you do not have a login account, please contact naiiaconnectsupport@naia.org. Once you login, please follow these [instructions](#).

Postseason Rosters (and ejection disclosures) will be processed electronically and the administrator completing the roster will sign electronically.

If you have trouble with the on-line nomination form, please contact the Athletics Communications Manager, [Brandt McCall](#). Any other general questions related to the official postseason rosters, please contact the Championship Sport Manager, [Bruce Tate](#).

1. A copy of this roster MUST be hand-carried to the site of the conference/independent and national tournaments and presented to the supervisor (conference/independent Softball chair for conference/independent tournament, and NAIA Site Supervisor/Tournament Committee for the World Series) prior to that institution's participation in the tournament. A team must submit its official roster in order to be eligible to participate in the tournament.
2. The deadline for certifying the official roster of 22 players is 30 minutes prior to the first game of any conference/CAC/affiliated group tournament, or at the coaches meeting of the World Series. Once the tournament begins, no player may play that is not on the official roster.

Once the National Championship (Opening Round or Final Site) begins, no player may play who is not on the Official Postseason Roster.

ROSTER CHANGES

A player may be replaced on the official roster between the Affiliated Conference/CAC/affiliated Group tournament and the NAIA Softball Championship Opening Round, as well as between the NAIA Softball Championship Opening Round and the NAIA Softball World Series by any eligible player whose name is included on the NAIA Official Eligibility Form for the current season. Again, the coach will need to hand-carry a copy of the eligibility form to each tournament if a roster change is necessary.

For Unaffiliated Group qualifying tournament plans that call for preliminary competition between conference teams, roster changes cannot be made once this preliminary competition begins. Unaffiliated group tournaments will follow the same roster change policies used for Affiliated Conference/CAC tournaments.

UNIFORMS

Teams must have both light and dark colored uniforms available. Home teams generally wear light colored uniforms and visitors wear dark colored uniforms.

NAIA Uniform modifications to allow sponsors logos/patches during competition.

- Limit of one sponsor logo or patch on a uniform.
- The logos may not exceed a standard size of 2.25 inches square.
- Sponsors of alcohol, tobacco, or any other legalized drugs (for example, Oregon marijuana) are not permitted.
- Sponsors whose sole or primary business function is sports gambling (e.g., FanDuel, DraftKings, etc.) are not permitted.
- Sponsor logos must be in the same location on each set of uniforms (e.g., if the home whites patch is on the neckline, all home whites must be the same; away jerseys could be in a different permissible location).

Softball: No Sport specific location restrictions Sponsor Primary Location: Front shoulder panel opposite manufactures logo. Between the apex of the neckline and the shoulder seam. Secondary Permissible Location: Centered on bottom right sleeve (as worn) or centered bottom opposite sleeve of manufactures logo Alternate Permissible Location: If neither of the above locations available back of the jersey, the apex/center of the neckline as close to the neckline as is possible.

EXPENSES

Each participating teams shall be responsible for its own expenses en route to, during and from all postseason events.

PARTICIPATION AT EVENTS

All participating teams and individuals competing in a National Championship, including Opening Rounds, must attend all event functions including, but not limited to – Student-Athlete Experience, coaches meetings, and Teaming Up for Character initiatives. Failure to comply will result in a penalty of a \$1,500 fine to the institution.

COACHES RESPONSIBILITY

The coach or designated person for each participating team must be in attendance and is responsible for their team at all times while at the site of the National Championship (Opening Round or World Series). This person shall accept the responsibility for the conduct of his student athletes at the National Championship site, during the championship and at all activities connected with the team's participation. In case of property damage, the offending institution shall be held financially responsible.

INSURANCE

Each participating team shall provide its own medical, hospitalization, travel and accident insurance for all members of its official party.

REPORTING SCORES

Scores from all games of the Affiliated Conference/CAC/Unaffiliated Group tournaments must be reported to the NAIA scoreboard via the Presto Stats Web-Sync feature within 24 hours of the game/session.

AFFILIATED CONFERENCE/CAC/UNAFFILIATED GROUP TOURNAMENTS

The Affiliated Conference/Continental Athletic Conference (CAC) (formerly Association of Independents/Unaffiliated Group softball tournaments are planned and administered by the Affiliated Conference/CAC/Unaffiliated Group Softball Committee under the leadership of their respective softball chair and subject to approval of all standards and conditions as may be prescribed by the Affiliated Conference/CAC/Unaffiliated Group Executive Committee/Commissioner.

All games must be held at an approved site and are to be played on an "OFFICIAL" softball field as defined by current NCAA rules (or NAIA-SCA approved exceptions).

Affiliated Conference/CAC/Unaffiliated Group tournament plans for all spring sports must be submitted to the National Office no later than **February 1** of each year.

DATES AND SITES

Affiliated Conference/CAC/Unaffiliated Group tournament games must be held at an approved home site of one of the participating institutions, unless a request for a neutral site has been made by the Affiliated Conference/CAC/Unaffiliated Group Commissioner(s) and approved by the NAIA Championships Department.

Conference/Group tournaments MUST be completed no later than May 10, 2027.

TEAM QUALIFICATION AND SELECTION

In order to qualify for a postseason tournament, a team must play a minimum of 16 games between January 1 and the start of the postseason tournament.

Consideration may be given to anyone or combination of the following criteria in selecting teams for the postseason tournaments:

1. An approved rating system;
2. Regular-season overall win-loss record;
3. Overall win-loss record against NAIA teams within the conference, and/or
4. Any system approved by the NAIA Championships Department.

ADMINISTRATION

All national qualifying tournaments are under the direct control and supervision of the leadership of the individual conference/CAC/unaffiliated groups. It is recommended that the conference/CAC/unaffiliated commissioner/president or a representative of the conference/CAC/unaffiliated executive committee be present at all tournament games as the tournament supervisor.

If available, the respective softball chair will serve as administrator for the conference/CAC/unaffiliated group softball tournaments in cooperation with the host site athletics director. When not available, the host athletics director, or a designated person, may serve in this capacity.

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP OPENING ROUND

The NAIA Softball World Series Opening Round tournaments are planned by the NAIA in conjunction with the Opening Round Host Coordinator and the designated NAIA Site Supervisor. Please see the NAIA Softball Opening Round Resources page for the Opening Round manual & host materials.

DATES AND SITES

The deadline for prospective NAIA Softball National Championship Opening Round tournament hosts to submit an official bid is **April 15, 2027**. Announcement of the National Championship Opening Round host sites will be on **April 30, 2027**.

FACILITY CERTIFICATION

In order to be eligible to serve as an Opening Round host, all potential hosts, including NAIA institutions, or Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) partnering with an NAIA institution, must complete the [Facility Certification](#) process. The Facility Certification process ensures that all Opening Round host facilities meet certain minimum venue standards. The deadline to submit a Facility Certification application for Softball is **January 15, 2027**. Once a facility becomes certified, it will be eligible to serve as a Softball Opening Round site for five years.

Completion of the Facility Certification process does not automatically qualify the submitter to host an Opening Round. The Facility Certification, in addition to submitting an Official Opening Round Bid Form, is required to be considered in the host selection process. The deadline for prospective NAIA Softball Opening Round hosts to submit an official bid is **April 15, 2027**.

A list of all Approved Opening Round Certified Facilities can be found [HERE](#).

INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

OPENING ROUNDS

The format for all eight Opening Rounds sites must be double-elimination to determine which team will advance to the World Series. If necessary, the following standardized inclement weather policy will be used at all Opening Round sites:

EVERY EFFORT MUST BE MADE TO COMPLETE THE OPENING ROUND ON THE FIELD – The NAIA Site Supervisor (in consultation with the NAIA National Office) is the final authority on implementation and administration of the inclement weather policy. One additional rain date is approved starting the 2025 season, however the only use of that date is with National Office approval and should be considered only after all efforts have been made to keep the tournament within its original schedule parameters.

QUALIFICATION OF TEAMS

The 48 teams that will compete in the 2027 NAIA Softball National Championship Opening Rounds will be determined using the 2026-27 Softball Qualification Plan approved by the NAC found in [NAIA Connect](#).

Each Conference/Continental Athletic Conference (CAC) (formerly Association of Independent Institutions) with six teams competing shall automatically qualify one representative to the Opening Rounds. Conferences with 10 or more teams shall automatically qualify two representatives to the Opening Round.

Conferences/Groups with less than 6 teams are considered "Unaffiliated" and grouped geographically by the National Administrative Council (NAC). Each grouping of six or more teams may qualify for an automatic berth through a national qualifying tournament. Unaffiliated groups that drop below five teams can qualify for the national championship only as at-large teams.



In addition to the automatic berths granted to each Conference/CAC there are no limits to the number of at-large berths a Conference/CAC may receive.

SELECTION & SEEDING

The 48 teams in the National Championship will be a combination of Conference/CAC/Group automatic qualifiers and at-large qualifiers determined by the Softball National Selection Committee. The 48-team field will be seeded by the Softball National Selection Committee. For full information on the Selection Committee process, please check out the NAIA Softball Selection Committee Policy.

FORMAT

NEW for 2026-2027 – NAIA Softball Championship Opening Round will be held at eight sites.

The NAIA Softball National Championship is a 48-team double-elimination tournament, consisting of 8 Opening Round sites. The NAIA Softball National Championship Opening Round brackets are a six-team, double-elimination format. Teams will be seeded #1-#48 by the Softball National Selection Committee and assigned to an Opening Round site using the following criteria:

1. Geographical location of teams
2. Financial considerations
3. Competitive balance

CHAMPIONSHIP SELECTION APPEALS PROCESS

If there is a misapplication of NAIA policy and procedures regarding tournament selection, an institution may appeal to the NAIA National Office.

Criteria for filing an appeal

- a. A written appeal citing the specific NAIA policies and/or procedures that have been misapplied must be submitted to the NAIA National Office - Department of Championships within 24 hours (or noon (central time) of the next business day if the end of the 24-hour period falls on a non-business day) from the time the tournament field has been released.
- b. Once an appeal has been submitted a response will be provided within 24 hours from receipt of appeal.
- c. Appeals must be submitted and signed by the Athletics Director and President of the institution.

The National Administrative Council sport liaison will be on the selection conference call to listen to the discussion of tournament selection. The liaison will report any concerns to the National Office immediately following the conclusion of the conference call.

TEAM TRAVEL/REIMBURSEMENT POLICIES

The National Administrative Council (NAC) and the Council of Presidents (COP) have approved a flat fee reimbursement rate for traveling teams in Opening Round competition. Qualifying institutions are responsible for making their own travel arrangements to the Opening Round and are responsible for all expenses.

The Official Travel partner of the NAIA is Short's Travel Management. Please contact **Short's Travel (816-323-6405)** if you need assistance in booking your team's travel. Traveling teams are no longer required to receive a quote from Short's Travel to be eligible for postseason reimbursement. Short's Travel has contacts with charter air travel as well as charter buses for ground travel.

Traveling teams will be responsible for a minimum amount of their transportation and housing expenses determined by the Council of Presidents (COP) prior to being eligible for expense reimbursement for participation in NAIA Softball National Championship Opening Round.

Institutions located less than 750 miles from their Opening Round site **must** use ground transportation.

Institutions located more than 750 miles from their designated Opening Round site (distance verified and approved by the NAIA) may travel by air.



Participating teams are responsible for arranging all travel arrangements, including the payment of air travel to your designated Opening Round site and to the Final Site if your team wins the Opening Round. The traveling team's institution is responsible for transportation expenses incurred from campus to the NAIA designated airport for departure and return.

NAIA WORLD SERIES

DATES AND SITES

The NAIA World Series will be played at TBD, from **May 27 – June 2, 2027**.

ADMINISTRATION

The National Championship is planned and implemented by the NAIA Championships Department under the guidelines and standards established by the NAIA-Softball Coaches Association (NAIA-SCA) and approved by the NAIA National Administrative Council (NAC).

Administration of the National Championship is under the direct supervision of a four-member Games Committee, which is composed of the officers of the NAIA-SCA.

Any member(s) of the Games Committee must relinquish their position on the committee if they have a team competing in the Softball World Series. The NAIA Softball Sport Manager will appoint an alternate(s) in these situations with approval from the NAIA-SCA Executive Committee.

QUALIFICATION, SEEDING OF TEAMS AND TOURNAMENT FORMAT

NEW for 2026-2027 – The NAIA World Series is an eight-team, double-elimination format, concluding in a best-of-three championship.

The NAIA Softball World Series (final site) is an 8 team, double-elimination format featuring the eight Opening Round champions. The World Series consists of two 4 team, double-elimination brackets. In this format, after the first round, losing teams will crossover to the opposite bracket's elimination round when they face a team from the other bracket. The winners of each double-elimination bracket advance to a best-of-three National Championship Series to determine the Champion.

The championship utilizes a straight play-through bracket. Opening Round champions advance directly into predetermined positions within the World Series bracket based on the overall national seed of the highest-seeded team in their respective Opening Round bracket. The final site bracket will not be reseeded after the Opening Round, and all bracket positions remain fixed in accordance with the original championship seeding structure.

GAME TIMES

The host organization, the NAIA Championships Department and the Games Committee jointly determine game times for all games. An institution will not play more than two games a day unless weather becomes a factor in completing the championship on the scheduled completion date.

TEAM TRAVEL/REIMBURSEMENT POLICIES

The National Administrative Council and the Council of Presidents have approved a flat fee reimbursement rate for traveling teams in Opening Round competition. Traveling teams will be responsible for a minimum amount of their transportation and housing expenses determined by the Council of Presidents (COP) prior to being eligible for expense reimbursement for participation in NAIA Softball National Championship Opening Round.

The Official Travel partner of the NAIA is Short's Travel Management. Please contact **Short's Travel (816-323-6405)** to book your travel arrangements if you need assistance.

TEAM HOUSING

All participating teams **MUST** stay at the designated hotels. Failure to do so would make a team **INELIGIBLE** for **participation and reimbursement**.

PARTICIPATION IN FUNCTIONS AT NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

All participating teams and individuals competing in a National Championship must attend all functions including, but not limited to – Teaming Up for Character, coaches meetings and Student-Athlete Experience event. Failure to comply will result in a penalty of a \$1,500 fine to the institution.

INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

It is the responsibility of the host Medial Director/Athletic Trainer at NAIA Championship events to determine when an event should be suspended and when it is safe to return to play as the result of severe weather. The AT is to notify the NAIA Championship Manager who, in collaboration with the appropriate personnel (i.e. Games Committee) will implement the predetermined action plan for both player and spectator safety.

RELATED INFORMATION

Meeting - There will be a pre-tournament coaches meeting prior to the start of the tournament. This meeting shall serve as an informational forum, team check in and will include a briefing by a representative of the game officials. All Head Coaches are required to attend this meeting.

Home Team Determination – The home team will occupy the third base dugout and wear a uniform color of their choosing. The visiting team will occupy the first base dugout and must wear a contrasting uniform top. The committee will resolve any conflict in the selection of uniforms. As a reminder, when teams play back-to-back games, they must be prepared to change uniforms, if necessary. The NAIA softball committee must approve determination of uniform colors. Noncompliance with this policy may result in misconduct as outlined in the Softball Pre-Championship Manual. For all opening round and World Series games, the high seed will have the preference to be home or away until we reach the championship game(s). For the championship game, the undefeated team will have the choice to be home or away. The if-necessary game, if needed, will switch the home/away teams.

Awards Ceremonies - Immediately following the championship game, awards will be presented to the top four teams, All-Tournament Team, Most Valuable Player, and Player/Pitcher of the Year. Teams receiving awards are required to attend.

Notice for Fans - All ticket holders voluntarily assume all risks of property loss and personal injury arising during its use. Management may revoke the license and eject or refuse entry to the holder by refunding the stated purchase price. The holder agrees that the host city and its agents, the NAIA and its agents, and the participants are not liable for injuries resulting from attendance at this event. The holder agrees that alcoholic beverages, in any form, shall not be allowed to be sold, dispersed or brought into the public area of this event.

Radio/Web Blogging and Television - The broadcast of any postseason game/match is governed by broadcast policies as printed in the NAIA Policy Handbook. This includes audio broadcasts and video broadcasts through conventional outlets and new media avenues. The NAIA Reserves the rights to all championship final site broadcasts and streams. All re-broadcasts or reproduction of an NAIA Championship without the expressed approval of the NAIA is prohibited.

NAIA POLICY HANDBOOK INFORMATION

The NAIA Policy Handbook can be found at [HERE](#). Please refer directly to the NAIA Policy Handbook for the following –

Competition

- A. Declaration of Intent to Participate – Bylaws, Article I, Section L
- B. Frequency of Play and Scheduling – Bylaws, Article I, Section F
- C. Criteria for Countable Contests – National Administrative Council, Article XXV, Section A, Item 12
- D. Reporting Results – National Administrative Council, Article XXV, Section A
- E. Forfeits – National Administrative Council, Article XI
- F. Conduct in Competition Guidelines – National Administrative Council, Article IV
- G. Ejection Policy – Bylaws, Article VI Section B Item 7
- H. Drug Testing and Reinstatement Procedures – Bylaws, Article VIII

Eligibility

- A. Definitions for Eligibility – Bylaws, Article V, Section B
- B. Eligibility Requirements – Bylaws, Article V, Section C
- C. Transfer Rules – Bylaws, Article V, Sections F-H
- D. Amateur Rules and Reinstatement – Bylaws, Article VII

Recruiting & Financial Aid

- A. Recruitment – Bylaws, Article II, Section D
- B. Campus Visitations and Tryouts of Prospective Students – Bylaws, Article II, Section C
- C. Financial Assistance – Bylaws, Article II, Section B
- D. Financial Aid Limits – Council of Presidents, Article XII

SUNDAY POLICY PLAY

As a matter of policy, NAIA Opening Round and National Championship competition will not be scheduled on Sunday. See NAIA Policy Handbook, National Administrative Council, Article XXIII for additional information.

DRUG TESTING

Drug testing may be done at any randomly selected NAIA National Championship competition for performance enhancing drugs. In accordance with the guidelines set forth by the National Drug Testing and Education Committee, the National Office will select which championships will incorporate drug testing each year. Student-athletes may be tested before, during and/or after NAIA National Championships.

For more information regarding championship drug testing, the [National Administrative Council Drug Testing Policy Manual](#), the safety of supplements and over-the-counter medications and resources to increase awareness on your campus, please visit – <https://www.naia.org/student-athletes/current/wellness-center/>

DRUG TESTING CONSENT FORM

Each academic year all eligible NAIA student-athletes must sign a [Drug Testing Consent Form](#) in which he or she consents to be tested for the use of drugs prohibited by the NAIA Banned Substance List to participate in any NAIA National Championship competitions. This consent form shall be administered by the institution.

To ensure all student-athletes participating in NAIA National Championship competitions have signed a consent form and such form is on record with the institution, a representative of each institution participating in any NAIA National Championship competition must sign an Official Certification of Student-Athlete Consent Form at check-in. It is recommended that before the season begins that an institution has all student-athletes complete the form to minimize the possibility of issues occurring when the postseason roster is submitted at a NAIA National Championship.

MEDICAL EXEMPTION FORM

The NAIA recognizes that some banned substances are used for legitimate medical purposes. Accordingly, the NAIA allows exemptions to be made for those student-athletes with a documented medical history demonstrating the need for regular use of such a drug. Exemptions may be granted for substances included in the following classes of banned drugs – Stimulants, anabolic agents, beta blockers, diuretics, peptide hormones, anti-estrogens, and beta-2 agonists. [Medical Exemption Form](#)



COACHES ASSOCIATION

NAIA-SOFTBALL COACHES ASSOCIATION (NAIA-SCA)

The NAIA-SCA is an association composed of softball coaches whose institutions are members in good standing. This body can affect policy relative to the NAIA softball championship series through 1) coaches membership approval as well as approval by the National Administrative Council (NAC).

The annual business meeting of the NAIA-SCA shall be held in conjunction with the National Fastpitch Coaches Association (NFCA) Convention. All NAIA coaches are encouraged to attend. Agenda items may be submitted by any NAIA coach and should be sent to the association's current president three weeks prior to the annual business meeting. All agenda items must be given in writing as a motion to be eligible for a second, before discussion can occur at the business meeting. Motions receiving a first and a second will appear on a mail ballot sent to all NAIA softball coaches.

PAST PRESIDENTS

1981-83	Marry Nutter, Pittsburg State (Kan.)	2004-05	Deb Thompson, Spring Arbor (Mich.)
1983-84	Hank Dicke, Kearney State (Neb.)	2005-06	Tracy Gastineau, William Woods (Mo.)
1984-85	Bonnie Kock, Mesa (Colo.)	2006-07	Wendy Spratt, Columbia (Mo.)
1985-86	Laurel Sue Smith, Salem (W.Va.)	2007-08	Myra Minuskin, St. Xavier (Ill.)
1986-87	Linda Draft, Wisconsin-Parkside	2008-09	Keith Kramme, Midland (Neb.)
1987-88	Judy Sherman, Pacific (Ore.)	2009-10	Terri Knecht, SCAD Savannah (Ga.)
1988-90	Jim Zeleznak, St. Mary's (Texas)	2010-12	Hal Wynn, Faulkner (Ala.)
1990-91	Doug Palmer, West Florida	2012-13	Lou Yacinich, Grand View (Iowa)
1991-92	Ralph Weekly, Pacific Lutheran (Wash.)	2013-14	Pat Reardon, Central Methodist (Mo.)
1992-93	Lynn Adams, Greenville (Ill.)	2014-16	Laura Klutsarits, Siena Heights (Mich.)
1993-94	Judy Sherman, Pacific (Ore.)	2016-17	Steve Babinski, Indiana Wesleyan
1994-95	Jeanne Raudensky, Ohio Dominican	2017-18	Mike Christner, William Penn (Iowa)
1995-96	Phil McSpadden, Oklahoma City	2018-19	Tony Segovia, McPherson (Kan.)
1996-98	Mary Ann Jennings, Mobile (Ala.)	2019-20	Kathleen Ihlenburg, Georgia Gwinnett
1998-99	Lisa Sweany, Tir-State (Ind.)	2020-21	Laura Klutsarits, Siena Heights (Mich.)
1999-00	Dave Hulsart, Northwestern (Iowa)	2021-22	Kat Ihlenburg, Georgia Gwinnett
2000-01	Wendy Spratt, Columbia (Mo.)	2022-23	Steve Babinski, Indiana Wesleyan
2001-02	Wendy Spratt, Columbia (Mo.)	2023-24	Paul Hunt, Benedictine (Kan.)
2002-03	Mike Renney, Simon Fraser (B.C.)	2024-25	Laura Klutsarits, Siena Heights (Mich.)
2003-04	Mary-Ellen Hall, Houston Baptist (Texas)	2025-26	Michala Cimino, Bellevue (Neb.)

NATIONAL FASTPITCH COACHES ASSOCIATION

The National Fastpitch Coaches Association (NFCA) offers a variety of services and professional opportunities for coaches at all levels. Please visit the NFCA Website for specific membership information.

NAIA-SCA VOTING

NAIA Coaches Associations must have a quorum (at least 50% of eligible voters) in order for a sport motion to be heard by the National Administrative Council. All voting will be conducted online following the business meeting to ensure that all head coaches have an opportunity to vote. Motions will still be presented and discussed at the Annual Business meeting. If desired, a "straw poll" can be taken by those present to determine if a motion will be opened for vote to the full coaches association.

2026-27 NAIA-SCA Officers

POSITION/TITLE	NAME, SCHOOL & CONTACT INFO
President	Todd Humphry , Freed-Hardeman (Tenn.), thumphry@fhu.edu , 731-989-6906
First Vice President	Jadyn Wallis , Science & Arts (Okla.), jwallis@usao.edu , 405-574-1260
Second Vice President	VACANT
Secretary	VACANT
Past President	Michala Cimino , Bellevue (Neb.), michala.cimino@bellevue.edu , 402-557-7274
NAC Liaison	VACANT

NAIA-SCA Constitution

NAME

The name of this organization shall be the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics Softball Coaches Association (NAIA-SCA).

PURPOSE

1. To foster and encourage the playing of fastpitch softball in accordance with the highest traditions of intercollegiate competition.
2. To establish and maintain rules of play and high standards of amateurism and good sportsmanship.
3. To encourage, through softball, the development of health, character, and responsible citizenship.
4. To develop within coaches a sense of responsibility to develop, promote, maintain, and conduct the game of softball.
5. To initiate, conduct, and supervise programs on the conference, regional and national level.

MEMBERSHIP

1. Active membership of this Association shall be comprised of fastpitch softball coaches who are actively engaged in coaching softball at an NAIA educational institution.
2. There shall be two classes of membership:
 - Active
 - Honorary
3. Active membership shall consist of coaches who are actively engaged in coaching a softball team of a member institution of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics.
4. Honorary membership shall be conferred upon any individual who, because of his/her contributions to the game of softball, shall be nominated by the Executive Committee and elected by a majority vote of the Association's active membership. The honorary member shall have all of the privileges of an active member.
5. All members shall have the privilege of speaking from the floor at meetings. In voting matters, each institution shall have one vote.
6. The activities of this Association shall be in accordance with the philosophy, aims, and objectives of the NAIA, under the jurisdiction of the NAIA National Administrative Council.

OFFICERS

1. The officers of the Association shall consist of:
 - President
 - First Vice President
 - Second Vice President
 - Secretary
 - Ad Hoc - Past President
2. The officers of the Association shall be nominated at the business meeting of the Association and elected by email ballot.
3. Each officer shall be elected for a maximum of four years, beginning with the position of Secretary and then rotating upward one year until the Presidency is served.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE OFFICERS

1. The President shall preside at the annual meeting of the Association and at all other meetings as deemed necessary. He/she shall appoint committee chairpersons and committee members, whose appointments are not otherwise provided by the Constitution. The individual serving in the role of President for the NAIA-SCA during the current academic year will also be a member of the Council for Student-Athletes (CSA). This role on the CSA is a two-year responsibility, regardless of their term lengths as an officer of the NAIA-SCA.
2. The First Vice President shall assist the President in the performance of his/her duties and shall exercise all the power of the President in his/her absence. He/she shall serve as ratings coordinator for the top 25 weekly ratings throughout the season. He/she shall work with the umpire-in-chief and the sport manager from the National Office to develop a list of umpires eligible for national championships. He/she shall also perform such duties as the President may designate.
3. The Second Vice President shall assist the President and the First Vice President in the performance of their duties and shall exercise all the powers of the First Vice President in his/her absence. He/she shall serve as coordinator of the top 25 pre-season poll. He/she shall also perform such duties as the President may designate.
4. The Secretary shall be responsible for keeping accurate records, and keeping the minutes. He/she shall also serve as the All-America Scholar-Athlete Coordinator. He/she shall perform such other duties from time to time as designated by the President.

COMMITTEES

1. The Association shall have a Hall of Fame Committee. The chairperson will be the past president.
2. A NFCA liaison will be elected by the NFCA members of the NAIA-SCA to serve a three-year term.
3. Vacancies for any cause on any committee shall be filled by an appointment from the chairperson for the remainder of the term.
4. All members of the Association are eligible to serve on any committee as deemed necessary by the President.
5. A four-member tournament committee shall be composed of the following:
 - a. officers of the Association
 - b. appointed coaches not participating in the tournament
6. If an officer's team qualifies for the national tournament, an active member of the Association will be appointed by the officers to replace them.
7. The highest ranking officer shall serve as the chairperson of the Tournament Committee.

MEETINGS

1. There shall be one annual meeting of this Association held in conjunction with the National Fastpitch Coaches Association convention.
3. A tournament coaches meeting will be held prior to the start of the national tournament to review all policies and procedures associated with tournament play.
2. The President may call any other special meeting deemed necessary by a majority vote of the Association's active membership.

AMENDMENTS

This Constitution may be amended by mail ballot by a majority of votes cast of the members. Proposed amendments must be submitted in writing to the President prior to or during the annual business meeting held in conjunction with the National Fastpitch Coaches Association convention.

EXECUTIVE REGULATION

1. Order of Business Procedures at all meetings of the Association shall be governed by "Robert's Rules of Order."
2. Agenda for Meeting. If any member of this Association wishes a proposal/topic placed on the agenda for the annual meeting, he/she must submit, in writing prior to or during the annual business meeting.
3. Regulations Governing Conduct of the NAIA Championship. The Association recognized that the NAIA National Softball Championship is under the jurisdiction of the NAIA and shall be supervised by the Executive Committee of the NAIA. Also, it recognizes that the championship is subject to all regulations governing conduct and eligibility of participants as set forth by the NAIA.

REPORTING RESULTS AND STATISTICS

REPORTING RESULTS/STATISTICS & SUBMITTING SCORES

Mandated by the NAC, all contest results must be reported to the NAIA Stats site (via Presto Stats) within 24 hours of completion and final statistics within 72 hours in order to be eligible for team and/or individual weekly ratings and honors. Institutions failing to report statistics and/or results any **two consecutive weeks, or a total of four weeks**, during the reporting period will not be eligible for to be included in the national statistical website or leaderboards.

Institutions failing to report statistics or results for two consecutive weeks, or four total weeks during the season will be subject to a monetary penalty. The first violation will continue to be a warning. Any second violation (first penalty), will be a \$500 fine. The third violation will be a \$1,000 fine and a loss of postseason awards. The fourth violation will be a \$1,000 fine and will be dealt with at the discretion of membership services. Fines will be due within 30 days of notification.

AWARDS

Nomination details and forms for the following national awards can be found [HERE](#).

NATIONAL PLAYER/NATIONAL PITCHER OF THE WEEK

The NAIA Department of Athletic Communications will select a NAIA National Softball Pitcher/Player of the Week. The conference/Continental Athletic Conference (CAC) (formerly Association of Independent Institutions/unaffiliated grouping information director or his/her designated representative must make nominations. The national office will not accept nominations from anyone but the conference/CAC/ unaffiliated grouping information director or his/her designated representative. Conference/CAC/unaffiliated groupings may nominate only one athlete weekly for national consideration.

Nominations must include the player's name, institution, class, position and hometown. Information in support of the nomination should include statistics such as at bats, hits, runs, RBI's, doubles, triples, home runs and batting average for non-pitchers; and innings, hits, earned runs, strikeouts, walks, won-loss record and saves for pitchers. Opponents and scores from the previous week's games (Monday-Sunday) must also be noted. Additional information could include any significant notes (i.e. records set, game-winning hits, etc.).

ALL-AMERICA

The NAIA-SCA Executive Committee is responsible for administering the selection procedures for the All-America Softball team at the site of, and prior to, the start of the NAIA Softball World Series.

The NAIA-SCA selects a first, second, and third All-America team, each consisting of 20 members per team (three pitchers, two catchers, five infielders, four outfielders, one designated player, one utility player, and four at-large positions. If no DP and/or Utility player is nominated, the selection committee will select an additional one to two at-large players. The third team will be voted on in the same manner as the first and second teams and also include the conference players of the year not currently selected for the first, second, or third team, regardless of position. The third team may exceed the numbers of the first and second All-America teams based on the number of conference players of the year that were not included in the first, second, or third teams. The committee will also select a player and a pitcher of the year.

The criteria for selection as an All-American are as follows:

1. Each player under consideration must have been named to the all-conference/Continental Athletic Conference (CAC) (formerly the Association of Independents)/unaffiliated group team.
2. Pitchers must throw at least 60 innings.
3. Utility players must have played at least two defensive positions (excluding DP) and she must have played at least 25 percent of her total games at each position.
4. Designated players must have played a minimum of 50% of total games.
5. Each player nominated must have played in 20 or more games through the conference/CAC/unaffiliated qualifying tournament.

The NAIA Department of Athletics Communications will release the NAIA Softball All-America teams on **June 2, 2026**.

CHAMPIONS OF CHARACTER® INDIVIDUAL STUDENT AWARD

Each participating team shall nominate one student-athlete for the [Champions of Character® Award](#) who has shown a documented display of exemplary character and sportsmanship during competition, on campus, and in the community that exemplifies the core values of Integrity, Respect, Responsibility, Sportsmanship, and Servant Leadership.

NAIA SCHOLAR-ATHLETE

Criteria for the NAIA Scholar-Athlete Award are as follows:

1. Nominee must be a sophomore or above in academic standing;
2. Nominee must have been in attendance at the nominating institution one full academic year at the time of the nomination deadline (April 15)
3. Nominee has a minimum grade point average of 3.50 (on a 4.0 scale) at the time of the nomination deadline (for transfer students the GPA is only at current NAIA institution).
4. Nominee has been certified as eligible and is listed on the eligibility certificate submitted to conference eligibility chair.
5. Nomination form is complete and submitted through NAIA Connect.
6. All the above information is to be received by **April 15** to be eligible for national press release/website, certificate and honors database – All criteria must be met by this date.

NOTE – There are no statistical/playing requirements needed to receive this award. NAIA Scholar-Athlete nominations will be filled out via NAIA Connect. You must have an account in order to fill out nomination forms as the forms are no longer available through SIDHelp. NAIA Connect is the only way to nominate student-athletes as a NAIA Scholar-Athlete.

If you do not have an account, please sign up and create your own. Access will be granted (usually) within 24 hours. Nominations will be processed entirely electronically. In order to complete a nomination, the student-athlete must have approved and signed a

release of their cumulative grade point average for nominating purposes. If you or your sports information office does not have a signed release form from the nominated student-athlete on file, a blank document (PDF) will be available for download.

This release form does not need to be turned into the NAIA National Office. You are asked to retain it for your institutional records. The administrator nominating the student-athlete will sign electronically. To be eligible for listing on website or honors database, forms **MUST BE SUBMITTED BY April 15**. LATE nominations will not be accepted.

To download a template to create an award certificate for your student-athletes that have earned this honor, [CLICK HERE](#).

RED BANNER SCHOLAR AWARD

New for 2026-2027: The Red Banner Scholar Award recognizes the highest level of academic achievement among student-athletes competing at each NAIA National Championship Final Site. The award celebrates the NAIA's commitment to developing champions in the classroom, character, and competition by honoring the student-athlete(s) with the highest cumulative institutional grade point average participating in the national championship.

Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible for the Red Banner Scholar Award, a student-athlete must:

1. Be listed on the official active championship roster (team sports) or be an official qualifier and active participant (individual sports) at the NAIA National Championship Final Site.
2. Be recognized as an NAIA Scholar-Athlete for the applicable academic year.
3. Meet all established NAIA Scholar-Athlete eligibility requirements and be submitted through the official NAIA Scholar-Athlete nomination process by the applicable sport deadline.

Selection Process

The NAIA National Office will determine the recipient(s) using approved NAIA Scholar-Athlete data.

- The eligible student-athlete with the highest cumulative institutional GPA at the national championship final site will receive the Red Banner Scholar Award.
- In the event of a tie for the highest GPA, all tied student-athletes will be recognized as co-recipients.
- No additional nomination is required beyond the NAIA Scholar-Athlete submission process.

SCHOLAR TEAM AWARD

In recognition of academic achievement, the NAIA names a Scholar Team for all sports in which Scholar-Athletes are recognized.

Based on a cumulative 3.0 season GPA for the current academic year on a 4.0 scale, all members of the team who appear on the eligibility certificate will be included in the GPA compilation. The deadline for Scholar Team nominations is **June 30**. Download the **NAIA Scholar Team Award Form** [HERE](#).

PLAYER/PITCHER OF THE YEAR

A National Player of the Year and a National Pitcher of the Year are selected annually. Selection is made by the All-America Selection Committee from players nominated to the All-America teams. The NAIA Department of Sports Information will release the Players of the Year on **June 1, 2027**.

COACH OF THE YEAR

The National Coach of the Year will be selected through an election process following the World Series involving all NAIA Softball Coaches. All conference/CAC/unaffiliated group coaches of the year, as well as the World Series quarterfinalists, will be included on the ballot.

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP AWARDS

The NAIA maintains a standardized awards program for its national championship, with awards provided to the official parties of the top four teams. A 16-member All-Tournament Team, including the Tournament Most Valuable Player, is selected by members of the tournament committee, with input from participating national championship coaches. The Tournament Most Valuable Player is included as part of the 16-member All-Tournament Team.



ORDERING AWARDS

Appropriate conference tournament awards are to be ordered by the conference chair and are the financial responsibility of the conference or the conference tournament host institution. Official NAIA awards MUST be ordered from:

Collegiate Awards

18081 E. Traffic way, Springfield, MO 65802

Contact – Brad Stout – brads@collegiateawards.com