



26-B-01

SUBJECT: 5 Seasons of Competition

ARTICLE I SECTION H FREQUENCY OF PLAY

Amend NAIA Bylaws Article I, Section H, Item 8 as follows:

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8. All-Star Competitions:

- a. A student-athlete may represent his/her NAIA institution in an all-star competition under the following conditions:
 - 1) The student is eligible for NAIA participation during the term in which the all-star contest occurs, or
 - 2) The all-star contest occurs during the academic year, or subsequent summer, in which the student completes his/her ~~fourth~~ **fifth season** of competition and/or 10th semester/15th quarter term of attendance.
- b. A student is limited to participating in all-star competition for a particular sport on no more than two dates between August 1st and May 15th. There is no limit on the number of all-star contests in which a student may participate between May 16th and July 31st.
- c. Any or all expenses related to travel, meals, and lodging for the competition may be paid by the student-athlete, his/her NAIA institution, affiliated conference, or certified football conference, or the host of the all-star competition.
- d. All-star contests in the sports of baseball, basketball, competitive cheer, competitive dance, football, lacrosse, soccer, softball and volleyball will not count toward team or individual contest limits in Article I, Section H, Item 1 of the NAIA bylaws. Practice activities in these sports directly related to the all-star competition, and consisting only of all-star competition participants, shall not count toward any team's 24-week season, provided such activities occur no more than five days prior to the start of the competition.
- e. All-star contests in all other sports shall count against frequency of play and scheduling limits listed in this section of the NAIA Bylaws.
- f. NAIA coaches may administer, direct and/or conduct all-star related practice and game activities that involve student-athletes identified with other institutions. Such actions by a coach will not be considered violations of NAIA recruiting or tryout regulations and will not trigger the notification requirement in Article II, Section D, Item 1.
- g. All-Star competitions may not use the NAIA or Champions of Character trademarks without prior approval of the National Administrative Council. The terms and conditions of such approval are established by the National Administrative Council Policy.

ARTICLE V SECTION B DEFINITIONS

Amend NAIA Bylaws Article V, Section B, Item 20 as follows:

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20. Season of Competition:

- a. Intercollegiate Participation

Participation in one or more intercollegiate contests, whether in a varsity, junior varsity, or freshman program, shall result in a season of competition. Participation in more than 20% of the maximum allowable number of intercollegiate contests or dates (excluding scrimmages) at an NAIA institution, whether in a varsity, junior varsity or freshman program, during the 24-week season. Any participation in NAIA-approved postseason shall result in a season of competition. The NAIA shall count seasons of competition charged by another intercollegiate athletic association at face value unless the season was charged based solely on participation in practice. Previous competition for students transferring from a five-year eligibility clock model will be evaluated under the NAIA definition of seasons of competition.

A student who participates in the following number of contests or dates during the 24-week season will be charged a season of competition:

Baseball	11 contests	Lacrosse	5 contests
Basketball	7 contests	Softball	11 contests
Bowling	4 contests	Swimming and diving	3 meets
Competitive cheer	3 dates	Tennis	6 dates/tournaments
Competitive dance	3 dates	Indoor track and field	3 meets
Cross country	2 meets	Outdoor track and field	3 meets
Football	3 contests	Volleyball	6 dates
Golf	8 rounds	Beach Volleyball	6 dates
Soccer	5 contests	Wrestling	5 dates/tournaments

NOTE 1: These limits shall be updated annually to reflect 20% of the maximum allowable contests or dates as listed in Article I, Section H, Item 1 of the NAIA Bylaws.

NOTE 2: In the sport of golf, an individual student athlete's season of competition will be determined based on the number of 18-hole rounds the student athlete participated in. A standard match/tournament consists of 3 rounds, which equates to 36 total rounds under Article I, Section H, Item 1, and the 20% threshold shall be calculated off of 36 rounds. A golfer shall be deemed to have participated in a round once he or she has begun the first hole of competition.

In the sports of indoor track and field, outdoor track and field and wrestling, a student athlete's participation in a competitive event shall count towards the student's 20% threshold, regardless of whether the student athlete officially represents the institution in competition, when the following conditions are met:

- i. The student athlete is certified as eligible in the given sport at any point during the academic year; and
- ii. The student athlete participates in a competitive event that includes one or more collegiate teams at any point during the academic year.

b. Non-Intercollegiate Participation

Participation in any professional-level competition on or after the first day of the thirteenth month following high school graduation. A student will be charged a season of competition for participating in at least one professional-level event within a 12-month period. A team, league or event will be defined as professional-level competition and result in charging a student a season of competition if any one of the following is met:

- i. Competition on a team or within a league (all sports) shall result in a season of competition if the team or league self-declares as professional.
- ii. Competition on a team or within a league (all sports) shall result in a season of competition if both of the following are met:
 - 1) The team or league self-declares as semi-professional; and
 - 2) Team(s) within the league pay or reimburse participants beyond actual expenses of travel, meals and lodging.
- iii. For individual sports, a student's participation will be evaluated based on the student's specific division, series or group/heat within the event. If that division, series or group/heat within the event is self-declared as professional or semi-professional, the student's competition shall result in a season of competition charged.

The NAIA shall take at face value the determination of a student's previous intercollegiate athletic association regarding whether the student participated as an independent or unattached individual while identified within that association. Additional seasons of competition, based on professional-level participation, will be charged when the student is not enrolled in a collegiate institution, or is enrolled but does not represent the institution in intercollegiate competition.

EXCEPTION 1: An individual who trains or competes as a member of a non-collegiate postsecondary education (i.e. preparatory school) team will not be charged a season of competition.

EXCEPTION 2: The date of a student's 18th birthday will be used as the date of high school graduation if:

- a. The date of high school graduation cannot be ascertained; or
- b. The student earned a high school equivalency through the GED or other exam(s) without otherwise graduating high school.

EXCEPTION 3: An individual who participates in national or Olympic team trials or competes as a member of a national or Olympic team will not be charged a season of competition for such participation.

EXCEPTION 4: ~~As an exception, a student who suffers a season-ending injury while enrolled at a non-NAIA institution may request a medical hardship from the NAIA to have the intercollegiate season of~~

competition returned. All medical hardship requests must meet the following criteria:

- a. ~~They must involve an injury or illness which is beyond the control of the student or coach and which incapacitates the student from competing further during the sport season in question as verified by the attending physician (i.e. M.D. or D.O.) who must have examined the student during the sport season in question.~~
- b. ~~Hardships cannot be requested for students who are incapacitated in the last regular season contest or postseason competition.~~
- c. ~~Participation by a student after being examined by a physician for the incapacitating injury or illness and before receiving written medical clearance shall nullify hardship considerations.~~
- d. ~~The student must have participated in 20% or fewer of the maximum allowable number of intercollegiate contests or dates, excluding scrimmages, during the 24-week season as listed for the sport. If the student competed in more than 20% of the maximum limit (see detailed list in Article V, Section B, Item 20a), the student is not eligible for a medical hardship.~~

NOTE 1: For any student seeking eligibility as a first-time participant in a given NAIA sport, this definition of season of competition shall be applied to all prior competition in that sport, regardless of the date of competition.

NOTE 2: For all other students, this definition of season of competition only applies to competition that occurs after May 1, 2022 **May 15, 2027**. For all prior competition for these students, the definition of season of competition in effect at the time shall apply.

NOTE 3: For purposes of this bylaw, eligibility shall be determined by a national third-party administrator (NAIA Eligibility Center) authorized by the Council of Presidents.

NOTE 4: Unless specified elsewhere in the NAIA Bylaws (i.e. Article V, Section G, Item 8) no student shall be charged more than one season of competition during any 12-month period. Participation in professional-level competition after May 15 shall be charged within the 12-month period that includes the subsequent academic year.

NOTE 5: Athletes charged a season of competition pursuant to this paragraph must also comply with other applicable NAIA Bylaws, including Article VII (Amateur Rules) and Article V, Section C (Eligibility Requirements).

ARTICLE V SECTION C ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

Amend NAIA Bylaws Article V, Section C, Item 9 as follows:

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9. a. To participate a second season in a sport, all students must have accumulated at least 24 semester/36 quarter (or equivalent) institutional credit hours. Transfer students shall use institutional credit hours as certified by the previous institution(s) to meet this requirement only for their first term of attendance at a member institution. Thereafter, only institutional credit recognized by the student's current institution and submitted to the registrar for posting on the transcript shall apply.

EXCEPTION: A freshman who initially becomes identified after the first term in the fall shall meet this requirement by having passed 12 semester or 20 quarter institutional credit hours. This exception shall apply to the second season of competition regulation only.

To participate the third season in a sport, all students must have accumulated at least 48 semester/72 quarter (or equivalent) institutional credit hours. Transfer students shall use institutional credit hours as certified by the previous institution(s) to meet this requirement only for their first term of attendance at a member institution. Thereafter, only institutional credit recognized by the student's current institution and submitted to the registrar for posting on the transcript shall apply.

To participate the fourth season in a sport, all students must have accumulated at least 72 semester/108 quarter (or equivalent) institutional credit hours, at least 48 semester/72 quarter hours of which must be in general education and/or in the student's major field of study.

EXCEPTION: An entering freshman who has been charged one or more seasons of competition for non-intercollegiate participation will be exempt from meeting the Progress Rule for one year (two semester/three quarter terms) at an NAIA institution. This exception applies only to a student's first season of competition at the NAIA institution, after which the student will be required to have earned the requisite hours needed to satisfy the Progress Rule.

To participate the fifth season in a sport, all students must have accumulated at least 96 semester/144 quarter (or equivalent) institutional credit hours, at least 64 semester/96 quarter hours of which must be in general education and/or in the student's major field of study.

Transfer students shall use institutional credit hours as certified by the previous institution(s) to meet this requirement only for their first term of attendance at a member institution. Thereafter, only institutional credit recognized by the student's current institution and submitted to the registrar for posting on the transcript shall apply.

- b. To participate in a second, third, and/or fourth and/ or fifth season in a sport, all students must have and maintain a total cumulative GPA of at least 2.000 on a 4.000 scale. The GPA for students with continuing identification at your institution shall be calculated according to the official institutional policy for all students. The GPA for entering transfer students shall be calculated by dividing all quality points achieved by the total number of hours attempted for all courses listed on all official transcripts from all institutions previously attended.

EXCEPTION: A student is exempt from this requirement during their second season of competition in a sport if the previous season of competition was charged for non-intercollegiate participation.

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ARTICLE V SECTION D RETENTION: REESTABLISHMENT OF ELIGIBILITY

Amend NAIA Bylaws Article V, Section D, Item 1 as follows:

1. A student may participate ~~four~~ **five seasons** in one sport in 10 semesters, 12 trimesters or 15 quarters of attendance if otherwise eligible. The 10 semesters need not be consecutive. During the ninth or tenth semester, or equivalent, the student may participate in any sport in which the student has not already used ~~four~~ **five seasons** of competition.

NOTE: Any student who has used no more than three seasons of competition in a given sport and no more than nine semester / 14 quarter terms of attendance as of August 1, 2026 may participate in a maximum of five seasons of competition in that sport. Any student who has used four seasons of competition in a given sport and/or 10 semester / 15 quarter terms of attendance prior to August 1, 2026 is not eligible to use a fifth season of competition in that sport.

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ARTICLE V SECTION F TERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY

Amend NAIA Bylaws Article V, Section F, Item 3 as follows:

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3. No student shall be permitted to participate in intercollegiate athletics for more than ~~four~~ **five seasons** in any sport.
4. Any student for whom any of the following conditions apply shall have no eligibility remaining in that sport within the NAIA:
 - a. Completed eligibility **in an athletic association for four-year institutions;**
 - b. Been permanently banned in a given sport(s) at any four-year institution, either NAIA-affiliated or other; or
 - c. Been permanently banned in a given sport(s) by any athletic association (two-year or four-year).

A student for whom any of these conditions apply cannot regain eligibility in that sport at an NAIA institution.

EXCEPTION: For eligibility purposes the NAIA does not recognize the NCAA "five-year rule" or age limitation regulations. Exhaustion of a student's five-year eligibility clock as defined by the NCAA will not be treated as completion of the student's eligibility. For students transferring from such a model, previous participation and enrollment will be evaluated in accordance with NAIA bylaws to determine seasons of competition and terms of attendance used.

Intent: To increase the maximum number of seasons of competition from four to five while retaining the 10-semester/15-quarter term attendance limit, and to eliminate the 20% and medical hardship exceptions to the charging of a season of competition.

Effective Date: May 1, 2027 as applied to eligibility decisions for NAIA competition in August 2027 or beyond.

Submitted by: NAIA Council of Presidents

