May 15, 2020

Dear commissioners:

In a world of NWAC normalcy we would be beginning our second week of spring sports championships focusing on softball, golf and track & field. As we all know we are far from normal☺ and here is the weekly update.

**OUTSIDE THE NWAC**

Yesterday I shared with you the changes that DII has made specific to transfer students. In case you missed it or chose to ignore it☺ here it is again:

Some of you may be aware of the following information and others may not.  NCAA Division II has eased their requirements for two-year college transfers for next fall due to COVID.  The exact language is below.  Please note the NCAA Division II staff has some work to do to clarify what “on track” means and that clarification will most likely happen in early June.   Once I receive the clarifying language, I will pass it on to you.

Two-year college transfer requirements for prospective student-athletes who are impacted by COVID-19 related issues (e.g., certifying institution does not accept pass/fail grades, two-year college ceased operations, two-year college transitioned to remote learning).

Allowed institutions to self-apply a two-year college transfer waiver for prospective student-athletes transferring for the 2020-21 academic year provided all of the following criteria were met and the student-athlete was enrolled in the courses necessary entering the 2020 spring term:

(1) The student-athlete was on track to complete at least two full-time semesters or three quarters at the two-year college;

(2) The student-athlete was on track to satisfactorily complete an average of 12-semester or 12-quarter hours of transferable credit for each full-time term of attendance at the two-year college;

(3) The student-athlete was on track to satisfactorily complete the following transferable credit-hour requirements: a) six semester or eight quarter hours of English; b) three semester or four quarter hours of Math; and c) three semester of four quarter hours of natural or physical science; and

(4) The student-athlete has presented a minimum transferable grade-point average of 2.2.

NCAA President, Dr. Mark Emmert, twice over the last seven days has stated that the “NCAA will not dictate or determine when athletics will start back up. No students on campus means no sports. The decision rests with presidents, local and state officials.” With that said we are seeing more states relaxing the stay at home orders and taking steps to getting back to normalcy. Please remember that five west coast states have made a pact to stick together, and because of this and COVID-19 being highly prevalent in the PNW, our timeline may be different than other parts of the country.

Conferences around the country are making changes to their playoff, championships, focusing on league schedules, and other events in order to help with the financial shortfall schools and conferences will face. DIII has canceled all championship banquets and moved all committee meetings to digital platforms for the next year. Other conferences have eliminated postseason tournaments in baseball, softball, m/w soccer, m/w tennis and other sports. Some leagues are doing away with first-round games in MBB/WBB tournaments and advancing the top eight teams directly.

Based on Chancellor White’s decision that CSU system will offer classes for the fall solely online, California Collegiate Athletic Association (DII CCAA) member institutions have determined that NCAA sport competition will not occur during the fall of 2020. The CCAA member institutions will continue to advocate strongly to maintain NCAA championship opportunities for all of our student-athletes, including our fall sports, during the 2020-21 academic year and recommend competition resume when it is safe and appropriate to do so for all of its members.

**NWAC**

Yesterday I had discussions with Executive Board members on a variety of topics. Most of our time was spent on fall sports. After much discussion the Executive Board and I are looking around June 15 to make our final decision on fall sports. A few reasons why the middle of June for our decision are:

* Hoping that our states will meet the state standards for the stay at home order.
* Hoping that our schools will provide fall classes in a hybrid classes, which we believe lends itself to bringing students on campus in some fashion.
* Hoping more breakthroughs happen with science and medicine to combat/treat COVID-19.
* Gives time to create safety guidelines for athletics.
* There is work going on via collaborative efforts with state higher education leaders to provide a proposal to state government leaders to reopen colleges

We are fully aware that there is no perfect date or time in which to make a decision that satisfies 36 community colleges, student-athletes, coaches, and fans. We will continue to do our research and please know that if we believe the decision must be made earlier, we will make that happen. The Executive Board is scheduled to meet the week of June 8-12. The decision will center on a reduced fall schedule or moving fall sports to winter/spring and in either scenario, for the ramifications known and unknown that will follow.

Please keep in mind if the NWAC says we are back, the decision really rests in the hands of our presidents and local and state officials. When we are back things most likely for next year and possibly the two years, NWAC will look different. We are working on what that will look like.

Next week we have scheduled a Zoom meeting with NWAC ATC’s and I have asked a couple of AD’s and a couple of coaches as well to participate. We will be reviewing suggested medical and safety guidelines from various health organizations in order to establish NWAC standards for return to play. If you have a trainer please encourage them to participate. They should contact Aaron Kilfoyle at the Community Colleges of Spokane for the details.

Attended a webinar titled, “Understanding Fans Fears.” As we think and plan for return to competition, we need to take into account the concerns of our fans. Following are quick bites from the survey taken across the country share in the webinar and may be of interest to you:

* 66% of fans are somewhat or very concerned about the pandemic
* People are most concerned about other fans

When coming to an event what are the issues concerns fans the most?

 Other members of the public

Lack of hand soap

Lack of social distancing

Lack of management to enforce social distancing

What will make fans come back to events?

Hand washing stations

Enforcement of social distancing

Hands free restroom fixtures

As you are having discussions with school officials may be wise to keep the above in mind. If this information holds true for sports fans, it probably holds true for the public who comes to campus.

If you recall a few updates back I shared with you when we do comeback, it would be great for each member college to create an “Opening Day” experience for our student-athletes. In the webinar I just attended on fans, the presenters shared the following comments that speak to the “Opening Day” idea.

* Think temporary and make this season novel, but special
* Unprecedented situations means opportunity
* Don’t let typical constraints limit your thinking

Hope you and your staff think seriously about creating an “Opening Day” experience but also a special season overall.

Just a reminder that we will be honoring the Baden Fall Sports POY’s and NWAC COY’s on June 3 via Zoom. More details to come.

Attached you will find principles that during this time of uncertainty have been developed to help us make decisions in the past, present, and in the future. Please take a few minutes to read them. They are not hard and fast principles that we must adhere. Rather, they help provide perspective, cohesion, and direction as we continue to strategize, decide, and respond to this ever changing environment in which we live.

In conclusion, Super Bowl Champion Coach Tony Dungy wrote a second book titled, The Soul of a Team: A Modern-Day Fable for Winning Teamwork. In his book Dungy says, “Every effective team needs to have a SOUL.” He defines SOUL as:

S = Selflessness...putting your own individual goals aside for the sake of the team.

O = Ownership...own your role.

U = Unity...everyone on the same page, following the same philosophy and working toward the same goals.

L = Larger Purpose...find the larger purpose of why your organization exists."

I believe his SOUL acronym rings true for us. Speaking of soul, those of us who grew up in the 60’s- 70’s hope enjoy this retro Tower of Power hit☺ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cXQNFm9zWoo>. Those who grew up after hope you enjoy the classic band.

 Keep up the good work, keep up the faith, stay healthy and stay tuned.

Marco