

GNAC SPORTS REGULATIONS

SOFTBALL

Updated Sept. 15, 2022



Section 1. PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENT

- 1.1. All member institutions fielding teams in softball shall agree to participate for the championship.

Section 2. SCHEDULE

- 2.1 All member institutions shall observe the NCAA starting date for pre-season practice.
- 2.2 The maximum number of games permitted in a single season shall not exceed the NCAA maximum number of allowable games. **(Revised 5/09; 5/10)**
- 2.3 The Sunday of the final weekend of the regular season is the final day for determining the seeding of the GNAC tournament **(New Section 11/12)**
- 2.4 Varsity contests shall be scheduled in accordance with the regulations as they appear in Article 17 of the Bylaws of the NCAA.
- 2.5 Conference members shall complete their conference-scheduled contests (except for contests which are postponed and are unable to be rescheduled under the make-up policy, Section 2.6) as assigned yearly by the conference office. The conference member(s) responsible for failure to meet this requirement shall be declared ineligible for the conference championship in softball for the year in which the infraction occurs. No conference game shall be scheduled after the Sunday preceding the conference playoffs.
- 2.6 Each member school will play four games against each other member of the conference. These games shall be scheduled as a four-game series at one site. Starting times for all conference games will be determined by the host institution. **(Revised 05/04; 10/04; 11/08; 10/09; 1/13)**
- 2.6 Make-up policy **(Revised 05/04; 11/08; 1/13)**
 - a) The intent of the GNAC softball makeup policy is that all games affecting seeding for the GNAC postseason tournament shall be played if possible.
 - b) **FOUR-GAME SERIES:** All conference games postponed shall be rescheduled if the visiting team has not traveled. If the visiting team has traveled, the games may be rescheduled under the following guidelines:
 - (1) If the visiting team has another conference game scheduled in the same general vicinity, the games may be rescheduled. **Example:** One or more of Northwest Nazarene's games with Saint Martin's were postponed. Those games may be

rescheduled if Northwest Nazarene is scheduled to play a series later in the year at Central Washington, Simon Fraser, Western Oregon or Western Washington.

- (2) In case of a rainout, the visiting team has the obligation to stay a reasonable length of time to play on the next day unless the visiting or home team is unable to play the next day because of religious reasons or because of previously scheduled airline reservations. Rescheduling a conference game will have priority over a previously scheduled non-conference game.
- (3) If games are postponed and no subsequent trip is planned for that general vicinity, the games will not be rescheduled unless one of the teams is in contention for a post-season tournament berth. In that case, the games shall be rescheduled. The games may be rescheduled for the original site or if both teams agree, the games may be rescheduled at a neutral site. If the games are rescheduled for the original site, the travel and hotel expenses for the visiting team will be split evenly between the two participating schools.

Section 3. Moved to Section 10.

Section 4. **CONDUCT OF PARTICIPANTS** – (See GNAC Bylaw Article 10, [Appendix A](#))

Section 5. **PLAYING RULES**

- 5.1 In conference games, the pre-game procedure shall follow the NCAA Softball Rules.
- 5.2 The eight-run rule after five innings (or 4 1/2 if the home team is ahead) shall apply to all conference games.
- 5.3 The NCAA halted game rule shall be used in all conference games. **Exception:** the final game (Game 4) of each full series between two teams will be played under the “regulation” game rule (as long as the conditions of a regulation game are met).
- 5.4 The International Tie-Breaker rule shall be used beginning with the top of the 10th inning in all conference regular season and conference postseason tournament games.
- 5.5 The host team shall be the “designated home team” for all games of a series. When teams play additional games at one site because of rainouts, the visiting team will be designated as the home team for any games originally scheduled for its home field.
- 5.6 The time between games of a doubleheader shall be a minimum of 15 minutes and a maximum of 30. If a tripleheader is played, the interval between games shall be a minimum of 15 minutes and a maximum of 30 minutes as determined by home management.

Section 6. **OFFICIALS**

- 6.1 Three umpires will be assigned to all conference games. **(Revised 11/08; 5/09)**
- 6.2 All umpires shall be ASA or CSA certified utilizing NCAA Softball Rules.

- 6.3 If a game has been rained out and umpires have traveled to the site of the game, umpires shall be paid for one game only plus their appropriate travel fee (if it applies). If the second game of the scheduled doubleheader has begun, umpires will also be paid for the second game. **(New Section 11/08)**

Section 7. OFFICIAL BALL

- 7.1 In 2023, the official ball for all GNAC regular-season conference games and the conference tournament shall be the NCAA Rawlings (NC12L) ball.
- 7.2 Home teams are required to provide batting practice balls to the visiting team (three buckets of BP balls).

Section 8. GAME MANAGEMENT/CONDITIONS OF COMPETITION

- 8.1 Established 2023 GNAC COVID-19 protocols are to be applied by each institution.
- 8.2 The host team will provide adequate equipment and supplies at the game site, including the following **(Revised 1/13)**:
- 8.1.1. Game balls
 - 8.1.2. Drinking water and cups
 - 8.1.3. Restroom facilities
 - 8.1.4. Towels (if pre-arranged)
 - 8.1.5. A heater for the visiting team (if the home team is utilizing a heater)
 - 8.1.6. A tarp and an adequate supply of drying agent
- 8.3 The host team shall provide a trainer at least two hours prior to game time either at the game site or in the training room. A trainer must be in attendance during, between and for a reasonable time period following the games (s).
- 8.4 The host team shall provide a well-trained and knowledgeable official scorer for each contest. The official scorer shall be the final authority for all scoring decisions made during the course of the game. Under no circumstances shall the official scorer be permitted to keep score in either the host or visiting team's dugout.
- 8.5 The host team shall allow the visiting team a maximum of eight minutes pre-game warm-up on the playing field. The visiting team will be notified of their pre-game warm-up time and ground rules/facility rules upon arrival.
- 8.6 Pre-game information, including parking, appropriate entry into the facility, practice times, etc. shall be communicated in writing to the coach and any appropriate administrators of the visiting team prior to the game.

Section 9. CONFERENCE CHAMPION(S) AND TOURNAMENT SEEDING TIEBREAKER INFORMATION

- 9.1 The winner of the GNAC postseason tournament will be awarded the conference's automatic berth in the NCAA regional playoffs. The team that finishes first in the regular-season conference standings (based on winning percentage) will be recognized as the regular-season

champion. If there is a tie at the top of the final regular season conference standings, co-champions will be declared. Both the regular season and tournament champions will be awarded championship trophies.

- 9.2 The top four teams in the final regular season conference standings (based on winning percentage) will qualify for the GNAC postseason tournament. Note: winning percentage is used to order the final standings even if all conference games have not been played.
- 9.3 Seeding tiebreakers for the conference postseason tournament are as follows:

9.3.1 Two-Team Tie

- 9.3.1.1 Head-to-head competition (GNAC games only)
- 9.3.1.2 Compare each team's record vs. teams occupying the highest position in the regular-season standings. The process shall continue by comparing records against each succeeding finish until tie is broken.
- 9.3.1.3 The team which allowed the fewest runs in games involving the tied teams will earn the higher seed.
- 9.3.1.4 Run differential comparison against two tied teams (i.e., runs scored minus runs allowed, up to a maximum of eight runs per game).
- 9.3.1.5 The winner of the last match-up between the two teams
- 9.3.1.6 Coin flip administered by the conference office.

9.3.2 Multiple Team Tie (when more than two teams tie at a position)

- 9.3.2.1 Head-to-head competition. The tying teams' regular-season head-to-head competition records in GNAC games shall be evaluated to determine if a team (or teams) has an advantage in wins. (If multiple ties are reduced to two teams, the ranking for the remaining teams is resolved by following tie-breaking procedures described in 9.2.1)
- 9.3.2.2 If 9.2.2.1 does not resolve the tie or reduce the multiple tie to two teams, then a comparison of the team's record against the other conference places of finish (beginning at the highest position), shall be completed. The evaluation process shall continue against each succeeding team until the tie is broken

Example 1: Teams A, B and C are tied for second (or any other position). In head-to-head games between the tied teams, their respective records are: Team A 4-2, Team B 3-3, Team C 2-4. In this example, their respective seeds will be: Team A (2nd), Team B (3rd) and Team C (4th).

Example 2: Teams A, B and C are tied for second (or any other position). In head-to-head games between the tied teams, their respective records are: Team A 5-3, Team B 5-3, Team C 2-6. In this example, Team C would be seeded 4th. The seeds for Team A and Team B (2nd and 3rd) would be determined by following the tiebreaker procedures outlined in Two-Team Tie guidelines (9.2.1)

Example 3: Teams A, B and C are tied for second (or any other position). In head-to-head games between the tied teams, their respective records are: Team A 6-2, Team B 3-5, Team C 3-5.

	Vs. Team A	vs. Team B	vs. Team C	Overall
Team A	----	4-0	2-2	6-2
Team B	0-4	---	3-1	3-5
Team C	2-2	1-3	----	3-5

Team A earns the tie-breaker and the No. 2 seed based on its 6-2 head-to-head record. Team B and Team C are still tied so the two-team tiebreaker is used. Team B earns the No. 3 seed based on its 3-1 record against Team C, which thus is seeded fourth. (**Note:** This example illustrates the rationale behind reverting to the “Two Team Tie” tiebreaker when a multiple tie is reduced to two teams).

9.3.3 Excessive Ties (when more than one tie occurs in the standings)

9.3.3.1 When comparing teams tied at one position in the standings against teams tied at another position, those tied in the other position shall, for purposes of comparison, be considered a single unit.

Example: Team A and Team B are tied for first place and are being compared against Team X and Team Y, who are tied for third place. Team A’s combined record versus Team X and Team Y shall be compared with Team B’s combined record versus Team X and Team Y.

9.2.4 Tournament Seeding Deadline

9.2.4.1 The Sunday of the final weekend of the regular season is the final day for determining the seeding of the GNAC tournament (**New Section 11/12**)

9.2.4.2 Seeding will be based strictly on winning percentage (even if games have been postponed and not made up, thus creating a situation where teams have played an unequal amount of games)

9.2.5 Additional Tournament Information

9.2.5.1 **Home/Visitor Determination:** Higher seed will be the home team for Games 1 and 2. Home team for Games 3, 4, 5 and 6 shall be determined by a coin flip (highest seed will call the toss). In Game 7 (the “if” game), the team that was the visitor in Game 6 will be the home team. The winner of the coin toss shall have the option of choosing home or away OR uniform color.

9.2.5.2 **Uniforms:** In Games 1 and 2, the lower seeded team will have the option of choosing uniform color. The opposing team must wear a uniform of contrasting color. In all other games, the uniform color will be decided via the home/away coin toss.

9.2.5.3 **Dugout:** Designated home team will occupy the third base dugout; the visiting team will occupy the first base dugout. **If necessary, teams will change dugouts even if playing in back-to-back games.**

9.2.5.4 **Batting Cages:** Teams participating in the ongoing game are not allowed to use the outdoor batting cages (teams warming up for the upcoming game do have cage access, however).

Section 10. GNAC TOURNAMENT

10.1 The team which wins the postseason tournament will earn the conference’s automatic berth in the NCAA regional playoffs.

- 10.2 The “tournament weather delay warm-up policies” adopted at the September 2014 coaches’ meeting shall be utilized during the GNAC Championships.
- 10.3 Games 1 through 6 will be played under the “halted game” rule. Game 7 will be played under the “regulation game” rule.
- 10.4 In the event inclement weather prevents the tournament from being played to its conclusion, the last played game in the tournament (if suspended) will be considered a complete game if it has met the NCAA rule for a regulation game.
- 10.5 If inclement weather limits GNAC tournament play and cannot be completed by the NCAA-mandated deadline, the team receiving the GNAC’s AQ will be based on the following formula regardless of whether the tournament has begun or not:

Until one team becomes 3-0 (i.e., wins the tournament), the highest-seeded team that has not been eliminated will be awarded the AQ. (Revised 9/19).

Section 11. STATISTICAL INFORMATION

- 11.1 All conference schools are required to use NCAA Live Stats or StatCrew software.
 - 11.1.1 The StatCrew or NCAA Live Stats game file shall be e-mailed to the visiting team sports information director and to the GNAC office as soon as possible at the conclusion of the game. If requested, a boxscore and play-by-play should also be faxed to the visiting team SID and/or head coach.
- 11.2 Per NCAA guidelines, statistics from games played against junior colleges, club teams and teams from foreign countries may not be counted when reporting statistics to the NCAA and the GNAC. The lone exception is games against Canadian schools may be counted if the Canadian institution plays at least 50 percent of its contests against U.S. four-year institutions.

Section 12. VIDEO EXCHANGE AND SCOUTING REPORT POLICY

- 12.1 No in-person scouting is allowed except in the case where involved coaches/teams are participating in the same regular season tournament (**Revised 5/09 and 11/13**).
 - 12.1.1 GNAC teams are prohibited from videotaping games involving other GNAC teams when participating in the same regular season tournament. (**Added 9/18**)

Section 13. ALL-CONFERENCE TEAM

- 13.1 For guidelines in selection of All-Conference team, see Bylaws, Article 9.1
- 13.2 For guidelines in selection of Academic All-Conference team, see Bylaws, Article 9.2.
- 13.3 For guidelines in selection of Conference Coach of the Year, see Bylaws, Article 9.
- 13.4 A Player of the Year, a Pitcher of the Year, a Newcomer of the Year and a Freshman of the Year shall be selected. See Bylaws, Article 9.41
- 13.5 A Player of the Week and Pitcher of the Week shall be selected. See Bylaws, Article 9.

Appendix A

ARTICLE 10 CONDUCT AND SANCTIONS

Section 10.1. **Sportsmanlike Conduct.**

10.1.1. GNAC Code of Behavior

In upholding and acting upon the principles, traditions and responsibilities enunciated in the Great Northwest Athletic Conference Statement of Philosophy, the Conference expects, and will insist upon, maintenance of commendably respectable standards of decorum and personal deportment of all players, coaches, officials and spectators at Conference contests. In this regard, Referees are recognized as fully in charge of such events, with full and undeniable authority to sustain such standards and take whatever enforcement or disciplinary actions, including declaration of game forfeiture, as are necessary and appropriate. Specifically; threatening, disruptive, unsportsmanlike, disrespectful, violent, harassing, and/or seriously distracting behavior will not be tolerated. In implementing this policy, the senior game official should, at the beginning of each game, clearly outline with the team captains and coaches the standards of behavior and decorum that will be upheld and enforced.

As a matter of Conference policy, all Referees have the full support of the Conference Commissioner's authority, as authorized by the Management Council and the CEO Board.

The Great Northwest Athletic Conference wishes to exemplify behavior of a kind that will deserve and command the respect and support of the public and campus communities which they represent and with which they relate, as well as the NCAA at large.

10.1.2. It shall be the responsibility of each institution to ensure that all individuals employed by or directly associated with the athletic programs of that institution conduct themselves in a sportsmanlike manner when representing their institution, especially at intercollegiate athletic contests.

10.1.3. Unsportsmanlike conduct shall subject the individual to disciplinary action. The institution with which the offending individual is associated may also be subject to disciplinary action if it is found that the institution's policies, action, or failure to act substantially contributed to the individual's misconduct.

10.1.4. Acts of Unsportsmanlike Conduct and Individual Penalties.

10.1.4.1. Acts of unsportsmanlike conduct shall include, but not be limited to: any person who strikes or physically abuses an official, opposing coach, player, or spectator. This person may be ejected from the contest and may be suspended for additional contests, as the Commissioner deems appropriate.

10.1.4.2. The following actions shall be subject to a public reprimand for the first offense and a suspension for one contest for an additional offense (a flagrant offense is subject to suspension on the first offense):

- a) Intentionally inciting participants or spectators to violent or abusive action.
- b) Using obscene gestures or profane or unduly provocative language or action toward officials, opponents, or spectators.

- c) Publicly criticizing any game official, Conference personnel, another institution or its personnel.
- d) Acts of unsportsmanlike conduct not specifically described herein.

10.1.4.3. Any person who engages in negative recruiting by making statements to a prospective student-athlete, his/her parents, high school coach, or other persons interested in the prospective athlete which are derogatory of another member institution, its personnel, or its athletic program shall be subject to a public reprimand for the first offense, and to the suspension of the privilege of recruiting for one season for an additional offense.

10.1.5. Penalty Imposition and Appeal Procedures.

10.1.5.1. Whenever the Commissioner concludes that there has been a violation of this regulation, he/she shall impose the penalty prescribed above or, where he/she is given discretion as to penalty, he/she shall impose a penalty that he/she deems appropriate.

10.1.5.2. Whenever the Commissioner decides to impose a penalty, he/she shall first give notice of the decision to the individual and the institution involved. **(Revised 10/06)**

10.1.5.3. In the event that the individual or the institution feels that the penalty is inappropriate because the violation did not occur or because the penalty is excessive, there shall be the right to appeal the matter to the Appeals Committee. An intent to appeal must be filed in writing to the Commissioner's office within one working day of receipt of notice of the penalty imposed. Once notice of intent to appeal has been filed, the official, written appeal documents and supporting information must be received in writing by the Commissioner's office within two working days of receipt of notice of the penalty imposed. **[Revised 5/13]**

10.1.5.4. The Appeals Committee shall conduct a prompt hearing, giving the individual or institution opportunity to be heard. The Committee may reaffirm, set aside, or increase the penalty as is deemed appropriate, giving the individual or institution written notice of its decision and its reasons.

10.1.5.5. The Appeals Committee shall stay the penalty imposed by the Commissioner pending the decision. No public announcement of the penalty shall be made until the individual or institution fails to give notice of the desire to appeal within the time period specified in 10.1.5.3.

10.1.5.6. Whenever a penalty of suspension is imposed at or near the end of a season of competition, the penalty may be carried over into the next season of competition.

10.1.5.7. Definition of terms used in this bylaw.

- a) Suspension in the case of a player means that the player cannot participate in the designated number of contests but may practice.
- b) In the case of a coach, suspension means that the coach cannot be present in the playing arena for the designated number of contests but may conduct practice sessions.