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Football committee reacts to new practice restrictions

The loss of practice and conditioning opportunities, along with officiating issues and the administration of the Stagg Bowl, were among items discussed at the Division III Football Committee's annual meeting February 11-14 in Key West, Florida.

The committee met with a representative from the American Football Coaches Association and discussed how the Division III reform package, which included a reduction in the number of practices and conditioning opportunities allowed during the nontraditional season, could affect the preparedness of football student-athletes.

The committee will prepare new acclimatization models in an attempt to gain back some of the lost practice opportunities. The committee initially will look at adding walk-through sessions on the acclimatization days. The new models will be forwarded to the NCAA Committee on Competitive Safeguards and Medical Aspects of Sports and the Division III Championships Committee for review.

Representatives from Salem, Virginia, the host city of the Division III Football Championship (known as the Stagg Bowl), also met with the committee. The two groups discussed proposed facility improvements, such as a stadium elevator, practice facilities, an interview area and press box, and also looked at the possibility of a long-term agreement with Salem.

To maintain better officiating during the playoffs, the committee is recommending a move to a seven-man crew for championship play, beginning with the 2006 tournament. The committee also recommended that, beginning in 2004, crews should have worked together for at least five games. Those recommendations will be forwarded to the Championships Committee.

The football committee also recommends NCAA financial support for the officials' clinics and supports full reimbursement (for travel, lodging and per diem) for alternates.

Game management during the playoffs also was discussed at the meeting. Committee members will be required to staff all quarterfinal and semifinal playoff games. The group emphasized the importance for committee members to be on site at these events. Discussions also took place on the role of the host institution during the playoffs, with committee members emphasizing the responsibility of the host institution to enhance the experience for the participating student-athletes and make it different than a regular-season game.

Committee members also recommended that John Neese, athletics director at Hardin-Simmons University, be named the next chair of the committee.

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