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# SPORT – BY – SPORT REGULATIONS & POLICIES

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## SOFTBALL REGULAR SEASON

### ***Regular Season Format***

Each softball program participating in the Conference competes in a round-robin, one-division, 22-game schedule, playing eight (8) of the 12 Conference opponents. Each team plays a three-game weekend series against six (6) opponents, and two (2) opponents in a mid-week double-header (one home and one away).

### ***Regular Season Services***

1. The Conference staff produces the 22-game schedule. In addition to the weekend matchups, each team will be scheduled two (2) mid-week games over the seven (7) weeks. BIG EAST games will be scheduled from March 24 through May 6; however, teams may mutually agree to play prior to March 24 if their schedules allow (i.e. Spring Break).
  - a. The host institution shall set the game times for mid-week series.
  - b. The host institution shall set the game times for weekend series; however, host institutions must utilize the following guidelines
    - The first game of a Saturday double-header shall not start before 12:00 p.m. or after 2:00 p.m.
    - Sunday game times shall be mutually agreed upon, but start no later than 1:00 p.m.
  - c. No school with final exam limitations will have BIG EAST games scheduled during finals. However, if an institution allows for home games to be played during finals, games may be scheduled.
  - d. Easter weekend games may be scheduled Thursday-Monday.
2. Schools are permitted to reschedule mid-week and weekend series upon mutual agreement by both involved head coaches and administrators as long as the visiting team has not left campus. The Sport Committee must approve any requests for change. The home team's administrator must forward requests for change to the Conference staff liaison, while copying the involved head coaches and visiting team's administrator. Conference staff should be consulted if there is a conflict.
3. There shall be no make-up date for lost games of either a mid-week or weekend Conference series.
4. The Conference staff circulates a listing of on-site administrators that handle cancellation and rescheduling decisions.
5. A publicity release, naming a Player and Pitcher of the Week, a weekly Honor Roll (for those nominees worthy of mention but not selected for weekly honors), as well as listing notes and statistics, is compiled and distributed by the Conference staff.
6. The Conference staff coordinates and publicizes a preseason coaches' poll that predicts the order of team finish.

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## SOFTBALL (continued) REGULAR SEASON

**Regular Season Policies & Regulations** (NCAA rules and regulations are followed unless specified below)

1. Scouting:
  - a. Scouting reports, videotapes, etc. regarding Conference schools shall NOT be provided to non-conference opponents.
  - b. Coaches may not scout Conference opponents in Conference or non-Conference games during the regular season. (Exception: Regular Season tournaments in which one or more Conference team is a participant; all postseason competition including the BIG EAST Championship regardless of participation.)
2. All softball members are mandated to meet the following minimum field specifications by the 2014 season:
  - a. Backstop, sideline and outfield fences must enclose the playing field.
  - b. Must have a designated bullpen area (must have a backstop and must have a pitching rubber and plate for both teams). Bullpen areas should be comparable in composition (dirt preferred) and in their distance from the dugouts.
  - c. All fencing enclosing the playing area that is NOT greater than eight (8) feet high must be capped. Fencing may be portable but must be permanent during the regular season.
  - d. Each institution is required to provide a tarp that is in good working condition for its field. If there is any possibility of inclement weather, tarps should be on the field the evening before.
- In addition, members are encouraged to meet the following minimum field specifications:*

  - a. Dugouts should be covered and enclosed from spectators (harm, weather, flying balls).
  - b. Host institutions are encouraged to provide comparable dugout amenities and equipment to the visiting team.
3. All regular season Conference games will utilize the following pregame protocol:
  - a. If there is **one cage** – Home team utilizes the batting cage first; visiting team goes second.
  - b. If there is more than one cage available, then both teams may utilize them simultaneously as long as the correct amount of balls are provided for each team.
  - c. Infield – Home team takes the field first, followed by the visiting team.
  - d. Host announcer must make announcement with five (5) minutes remaining in the cages (batting practice) and one (1) minute remaining on the infield.
  - e. Opposing teams may not warm up in the outfield while their opponent is taking infield.

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## SOFTBALL (continued) REGULAR SEASON

### *Regular Season Policies & Regulations (continued)*

- f. Actual pregame timing is detailed below (based on Noon start and whether an institution has one or two batting cages):

| One Cage: | TIME BEFORE FIRST PITCH | ACTION                            |
|-----------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|
|           | 10:19 a.m. - 10:54 a.m. | Home Team Batting Practice*       |
|           | 10:55 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. | Visiting Team Batting Practice*   |
|           | 11:30 a.m. - 11:37 a.m. | Home Team Infield                 |
|           | 11:37 a.m. - 11:45 a.m. | Visiting Team Infield             |
|           | 11:45 a.m. - 11:55 a.m. | Field Crew                        |
|           | 11:51 a.m. - 11:55 a.m. | Umpires Meeting at Home Plate     |
|           | 11:55 a.m. - 11:59 a.m. | Introductions and National Anthem |
|           | Noon                    | Game Begins                       |

\*During team batting practice, opposing team can use outfield for stretching, warm-ups and outfield.

| Two Cages: | TIME BEFORE FIRST PITCH  | ACTION   |
|------------|--------------------------|--|
|            | 10:45 a.m.* - 11:25 a.m. | Home Team Batting Practice<br>Visiting Team Batting Practice |
|            | 11:30 a.m. - 11:37 a.m.  | Home Team Infield  |
|            | 11:38 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.  | Visiting Team Infield  |
|            | 11:45 a.m. - 11:55 a.m.  | Field Crew   |
|            | 11:51 a.m. - 11:55 a.m.  | Umpires Meeting at Home Plate                                |
|            | 11:55 a.m. - 11:59 a.m.  | Introductions and National Anthem                            |
|            | Noon                     | Game Begins  |

\*The Home Team must make field and equipment available two hours before game time (weather permitting).

4. Teams must schedule flights as late as necessary on competition day to complete games.
5. Host Responsibilities
  - a. Host Institution must generate game contracts for all Conference regular season games.
  - b. Each institution that charges admission for regular season games must offer 40 complimentary admissions to the visiting team. Admission procedures are to be handled by the host school.
  - c. The host institution is required to provide three screens, six dozen balls, two tees and a pitching machine with balls for the visiting team. Best efforts should be made to provide equitable equipment for visiting team practice and warm-ups.
  - d. The host institution shall make best efforts to provide a minimum of one hour of practice time on the actual playing field up until 7:00 p.m. on the day prior to the game for the visiting team. The visiting team must schedule the practice at least seven (7) days in advance. In case of inclement weather, batting cages or other indoor space should be made available to accommodate the visiting team.
  - e. An administrator from the host institution must be on site during all BIG EAST regular season games. The on-site administrator may NOT have other primary game functions (i.e. PA announcer, scorekeeper, field preparation, etc.).

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## SOFTBALL (continued) REGULAR SEASON

### *Regular Season Policies & Regulations (continued)*

- f. Regular Season bat testing shall be conducted by the host institution as follows:
  1. The designated on-site home game administrator shall serve as the bat tester.
  2. Bats will be tested before the first game of each series. Testing will be conducted no earlier than two and a half hours before the game.
  3. Maximum of 20 bats may be tested.
  4. If a bat fails testing, it will be removed and no add-ons will be allowed (i.e. only 19 can be used – no replacement).
  5. If a bat is damaged during play, testing for a new bat would occur before the next game.
  6. Teams may use any bat that it tested.
- g. If the host administrator has difficulty making a rescheduling decision during a weekend period, an administrator from the visiting institution may be contacted to assist with the decision. The Conference staff or Softball Committee members may also be contacted, if necessary.
6. Home team bands are not permitted to be located behind the visiting team bench. Bands, artificial noisemakers, air horns, bells, whistles, electronic amplifiers, artificial clappers and/or similar items are not permitted to make noise during live action.
7. Bands, cheerleaders and mascots are prohibited from traveling to away contests.
8. Fans may not display signs or banners deemed as being offensive or inappropriate to particular institutions, players or coaches in the facility. These banners should be identified and removed by security personnel.
9. A pregame meeting will be held for all BIG EAST regular season games with each head coach, host game administrator and the officials to determine at what point a new inning will not be started.
10. The BIG EAST does not use the NCAA tiebreaker procedure. If a game is tied following the seventh inning of play, it will continue until the game is completed or play can no longer continue due to darkness, inclement weather, etc. A regulation tie game shall be declared by the plate umpire if the score is tied when the game must be called after five or more equal innings, or if a team that went to bat second is at bat when the game is terminated and has scored in the incomplete inning the same number of runs as the other team.
11. The NCAA halted-game rule is in effect for a two-game series on a Saturday. However, it is not permissible for teams to utilize an additional date to play lost games of either a two or three-game series (i.e. stay overnight to play Thursday for lost games of a Wednesday doubleheader OR stay overnight to play Sunday for lost games of a Friday-Saturday series). Any changes to scheduled games must be made prior to the visiting team leaving campus and by approval of the Sport Committee.
12. When the site of a series is switched because of field conditions, the originally scheduled home team retains that status as does the originally scheduled visiting team. The schedule relative to home team designation does not change the following year. Financial travel compensation is determined between the involved institutions.
13. Thunder and Lightning Safety Policy: The Conference has adopted as policy NCAA Guideline 1D for Lightning Safety. You may find the policy online at:

[http://www.lightningsafety.com/nlsi\\_pls/Sports\\_Medicine\\_Handbook\\_lightning.pdf](http://www.lightningsafety.com/nlsi_pls/Sports_Medicine_Handbook_lightning.pdf)

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## SOFTBALL (continued) REGULAR SEASON

### **Regular Season Policies & Regulations (continued)**

14. The BIG EAST Conference Softball Coaches Association holds its official annual meeting each September. These meetings are held at the Conference office headquarters in even years and via conference call in odd years. Attendance is mandatory for all head coaches. In extreme situations where the head coach cannot attend, the institution's Sport Administrator or Director will determine the substitution.

### **Regular Season Awards**

1. Regular Season Team Champion (trophy and individual awards)
2. First Team All-Conference (2P, C, 1B, 2B, 3B, SS, 3 OF, U/P, DP/U/P) \*
3. Second Team All-Conference (2P, C, 1B, 2B, 3B, SS, 3 OF, U/P, DP/U/P) \*
4. Third Team All-Conference (2P, C, 1B, 2B, 3B, 3 OF, SS, U/P, DP/U/P) \*
5. Player of the Year \*
6. Pitcher of the Year \*
7. Rookie of the Year \*
8. Coaching Staff of the Year \*

\* Selection Process

- Coaches nominate their own players by position.
- Nominees are forwarded to each coach on a ballot with supporting information.
- Point system that is used for All-Regional and All-American voting is utilized.
- Selections are based on Conference statistics only.
- Coaches submit choices (via the Conference's web site) from the nominee list, but cannot select their own players.
- Conference staff approves final selections.

### **Championship Format**

1. Eight-team, single-elimination. The event is conducted in three days and may be extended one day if severe inclement weather impedes the completion of the tournament.

The game schedule is as follows:

|       |                                       |        |  |
|-------|---------------------------------------|--------|--|
| DAY 1 | 10:00 a.m.                            | Game 1 | #6 vs. #3 ^  |
|       | 12:30 p.m.                            | Game 2 | #7 vs. #2 ^  |
|       | 4:00 p.m.                             | Game 3 | #5 vs. #4 ^  |
|       | 6:30 p.m.                             | Game 4 | #8 vs. #1 ^  |
| DAY 2 | TBD ^^                                | Game 5 | Winner Game 1 vs. Winner Game 2 ^                    |
|       | TBD ^^                                | Game 6 | Winner Game 3 vs. Winner Game 4 ^                    |
| DAY 3 | TBD ^^                                | Game 7 | Championship Game<br>Winner Game 5 vs. Winner Game 6 |
| DAY 4 | Rain Date – Games played as necessary |        |  |

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## SOFTBALL (continued) CHAMPIONSHIP

### **Championship Format (continued)**

- ^ Conference staff has the discretion to change the order of Day 1 Quarterfinal Games and the corresponding Day 2 Semifinal games based on the host/local institution playing in the tournament which will create a positive Championship environment and facilitate attendance.
- ^^ Conference staff will determine start time based on availability of television coverage and other marketing/promotional opportunities. Recommended semifinal start times (Friday) based on the proposed Championship game times (Saturday):

#### **Saturday Championship Game Time:**

2:00 p.m. ....  
1:00 p.m. ....  
12:00 p.m. ....

#### **Friday Semifinal Game Times:**

Semifinal #1 = 4:00 p.m.; Semifinal #2 = 6:30 p.m.  
Semifinal #1 = 3:00 p.m.; Semifinal #2 = 5:30 p.m.  
Semifinal #1 = 2:00 p.m.; Semifinal #2 = 4:30 p.m.

2. A tournament practice day is scheduled on the Wednesday preceding the Championship. Participating teams will be provided a 90-minute (depending on host facilities) practice based on tournament seed and time they play on Day One.
3. Mandatory bat testing will be conducted by a Softball Committee member at the Championship site on the day prior to the first day of competition. Conference staff will develop a testing schedule based on each team's practice time. Testing will occur 30 minutes prior to each team's scheduled practice. Teams must bring all bats that will be utilized during the tournament.
4. A tournament meeting is conducted for the eight (8) participating head coaches the evening preceding the start of the Championship.
5. A dinner honoring the eight (8) participating teams will be held the evening preceding the start of the Championship. Head Coaches and Administrators may each bring one guest, at their respective institution's expense.
6. The tournament champion earns the Conference's automatic bid to the NCAA Tournament. The highest remaining seed in the BIG EAST Championship will be declared the automatic bid representative should the tournament not be completed. In the event that the Championship is not completed, no champion will be declared.

### **Championship Seeding Requirements/Procedures**

The top eight (8) teams are selected and seeded according to Conference winning percentage at the conclusion of the season. The Softball Committee may evaluate the selection and/or seeding if a team has played less than 16 games.

#### **Tie-Breaking Policies**

The following policies are set up to break ties at the end of the regular season for selection/seeding purposes. Follow the appropriate steps in order. Once one or more teams gain an advantage in the case of a multiple-team tie, revert to the beginning of the tie-breaking policies with the remaining teams. If the ties cannot be broken, the Commissioner or his designee will conduct a coin toss.

1. Regular season head-to-head results. If three or more teams are tied, they are viewed as a "mini-conference" when comparing head-to-head results. The team or teams with the best combined record versus the other teams in the mini-conference gains the advantage.

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# SPORT – BY – SPORT REGULATIONS & POLICIES

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## SOFTBALL (continued)

### CHAMPIONSHIP

#### ***Championship Seeding Requirements/Procedures (continued)***

2. Each team's record versus the team occupying the highest position in the standings, continuing down through the standings until one team gains an advantage.

NOTE: When arriving at another pair of tied teams while comparing records, use each team's record against the tied teams as a group rather than the performance against the individual tied teams.

3. Runs given up against each other.

#### ***Championship Policies & Regulations*** (NCAA rules and guidelines are followed unless otherwise noted; regular season game management policies, where applicable, apply to the Championship)

1. All tournament games must be played with the official league ball, the Wilson A9010B SST.
2. The Conference staff contracts umpires based upon the recommendations of the Conference's independent assignor.
3. Dugouts are limited to 20 players in uniform and a total of 27 persons. Players must be designated prior to competition and no replacements will be permitted. If the host institution provides bat handlers, 28 individuals shall be permitted.
4. The higher-seeded team is designated the home team during the first round of competition, shall bat last and occupy the third base dugout. Visiting team shall have choice of uniform. In subsequent games, the procedure as outlined in the NCAA Championship Manual is followed. This pertains to dugout and uniform assignment.
5. All games shall be seven innings, except that a five-inning, eight-run rule will be used. If play is stopped before a seven-inning game is completed and the eight-run rule is not in effect, it shall resume at the point of interruption.
6. A tarp must be available to cover the Championship field in case of inclement weather during the tournament.
7. In the event of rain, precluding further competition, the Protest Committee, which is comprised of the Softball Committee and the BIG EAST administrator as chair, determines rescheduling.
8. A representative from field operations, along with the Protest Committee, as described above, determines if field conditions are playable prior to the start of a game. Once play begins, the decision is that of the home plate umpire.

#### ***Championship Awards, Gifts & Services***

1. The Championship team receives a trophy and individual awards.
2. The runner-up team receives a trophy.
3. A Most Outstanding Player receives an award and is selected by a vote of qualified persons as determined by the Conference staff.

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## **SOFTBALL (continued)**

### **CHAMPIONSHIP**

#### ***Championship Awards, Gifts & Services (continued)***

4. An All-Tournament Team will be selected from among the eight (8) participating institutions at the site of the Championship. Twelve (12) players will be selected with no specific regard to position (i.e., a certain number of outfielders, infielders, etc.). One of the twelve will be designated Most Outstanding Player. A selection committee shall be comprised of the Sport Committee, staff and select media, with input from the sports information representatives of the eight participating institutions.
5. The Conference staff produces a Championship program. A press release previewing the tournament field is distributed a week prior to the Championship.
6. Each Softball student-athlete competing in the Championship receives a gift from the Conference office, which is shipped to each head coach after the Softball Championship.