

Prepared by the National Wrestling Coaches Association (NWCA) Division II Leadership Group

Amendment Requests to the NCAA Division II COVID-19 blanket eligibility waivers released July 22:

- Recommend that in individual sports any student-athlete who decides to compete this upcoming season and cannot compete in any NCAA Division II Super Regional or the NCAA Division II National Championships due to COVID-19 would be granted another season of competition and two additional semesters in which to utilize that season, if they choose to exercise that option.
- Once the individual is in the field of the NCAA Super Regional, that meets the requirement for having competed. Getting injured in the regional and not advancing to the national tournament does not qualify the student-athlete for this waiver relief.
- Any student-athlete that qualifies for the NCAA Division II National Championships and is injured at the national tournament does not qualify for this relief. This amendment is only intended to provide relief due to cancellations necessitated by COVID-19.

Rationale and Talking Points in respect to this request:

- While the cancellations last year caught us all by surprise, the potential of this season being cancelled is a much more real possibility and we would like to see legislation that protects our universities, our programs, and our student-athletes.
 - We would especially highlight the protection for the student-athlete that takes the chance to come back and represent his institution in light of the uncertainty of the current situation. These student-athletes should not be penalized for making this choice, and should know we are invested in them.
- One of the most crippling effects of the current situation to universities, especially small universities like many of those in Division II, would be for them to see a decline in enrollment. We fear that not providing clear language ensuring that student-athletes will retain their eligibility if there is a season or championship cancellation could influence them to not enroll for the upcoming semester.
 - All individual sports are impacted by this waiver: swimming & diving, track & field, and wrestling. This further increases the impact on institutional retention and enrollment considerations.

- We feel that the greatest concern related to retention involves the questions surrounding the future eligibility of our student-athletes. There are great concerns about whether student-athletes will be returning to their institutions with the uncertainty of a National Championship being contested this year. If these student-athletes do not return and opt to take the year off, that puts our institutions and programs at a tremendous risk as many are enrollment-driven.
- The 50% or less blanket waiver that was recently released is a step in the right direction, but we feel it is not sufficient enough to entice individual sport student-athletes back to campus this fall. When you couple the uncertainty of this coming year with the realities of the opportunities lost this past season, we risk not being able to retain our students-athletes for the upcoming year.
- We do understand there is a waiver process that can be undertaken for mitigating circumstances. Our question would be what are mitigating circumstances – missing two consecutive postseasons? Instead of processing waivers for all these individual student-athletes, we feel it would be more efficient, and helpful to all involved, to get in front of it and have a plan that protects the member institutions and their student-athletes if championships are again cancelled.

With the issues outlined above, we would appreciate the release of language that states that eligibility relief will be granted for Division II student-athletes if a national championship is not contested due to COVID-19. We understand that the burden will fall back on to the schools to manage scholarships in these situations. We are not asking for additional scholarship dollars or an increase in scholarship equivalencies, we are asking for additional security so that we can make sure we are able to get our student-athletes back on campus. Each institution can figure out how to manage individual situations if the impacted student-athletes wish to return. There will be tough choices for coaches, but we would rather face those choices as opposed to having our institutions be at risk of discontinuing programs or even worse, closing entire campuses.

Other Considerations:

- Time-sensitive nature of this request- student-athletes will be making decisions as to returning to our campuses soon.
- What is the downside, and how can we address those challenges?