

MINUTES

**The Women's Basketball Head Coaches  
of the Southern Conference**

**Southern Conference Office  
Spartanburg, S.C.**

**May 12, 2020**

**In attendance:**

Jackie Carson, Furman  
Susie Gardner, Mercer  
Katie Burrows, Chattanooga  
Trina Patterson, UNCG  
Jody Smith, UNCG  
Carley Kuhns, Samford  
Kiley Hill, Western Carolina  
Jimmy Garrity, Wofford  
Sue Arakas, Southern Conference  
Jim Schaus, Southern Conference  
Geoff Cabe, Southern Conference  
Hannah Bradley, Southern Conference (recording secretary)

Jody Smith, chair of the Women's Basketball committee, welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked everyone for their patience with the virtual setting. She introduced committee members Stacey Miller (Western Carolina), Laura Herron (Chattanooga), Sybil Blalock (Mercer), Susan Epps (ETSU) and Jason Donnelly (Furman) as well as women's basketball head coaches Carley Kuhns (Samford) and Jimmy Garrity (Wofford).

1.     Topic:                     Previous Minutes. (Supplement I)  
       Issue:                    Review of minutes from the May 14, 2019 meeting.  
       Action:                   **It was VOTED (unanimous).**  
                                  **“To approve the minutes of the May 14, 2019 meeting as distributed.”**
  
2.     Topic:                    Commissioner's Remarks.  
       Issue:                    Mr. Schaus welcomed the group and thanked them for their work as leaders within their athletic departments and programs. He pointed out he was glad we could get in our conference tournament prior to the COVID-19 virus halting NCAA competition. He congratulated Ms. Kuhns and voiced his sadness that Samford couldn't compete in the NCAA tournament as the SoCon champions. Mr. Schaus mentioned that the conference has been discussing cost saving measures and will have an update to share with coaches' groups shortly. He mentioned that men's and women's basketball won't be greatly affected but that other sports will reduce the field size at championships. He informed the group that the conference has had great discussions about staying in Asheville (one year remaining on existing contract) and that those conversations are going smoothly. Mr. Schaus talked briefly about the NCAA legislation and the issues of pay for play and transfers. Overall, Mr. Schaus thinks it was a great year as a conference and thinks the future is bright for the league. Mr. Schaus said he has plans in mind that will make the conference stronger and emphasis student-athlete welfare. He mentioned the student-athlete mental-health summit to take place next fall. Additionally, he mentioned the 100-year anniversary this year and expressed that he hopes schools will take part in the

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year-long celebration. Mr. Schaus said an emphasis will be to celebrate the current member schools. With no questions for him, he concluded his report.

3. Topic:

Officiating.

Ms. Debbie Williamson greeted the group and said she is excited to be a part of the SoCon. She thanked Judy Stroud, Sue Arakas and Mr. Schaus for their help during the season. She briefly told the group about herself, that she played at women's basketball at Louisiana Tech, was an assistant at Georgia Southern, and that she home schooled her children for 15 years before beginning her career in officiating, rules editing and administration.

Ms. Williamson stated that when she took over the job of Coordinator of women's basketball officials from Charlene Curtis, she recognized that there would be challenges managing nine leagues. While it is her sixth year as a conference coordinator, she knows that her first year in any league always has its difficulties, as she gets to know the people in the league and welcomes new officials to the roster.

Ms. Williamson reported that the roster of SoCon officials was made up of 35% from tier one, 45% from tier two and 18% from tier three. She explained that all DI conferences, outside of five on the west coast, use a priority ranking system. Officials rank conferences using various criteria such as ease of travel/accessibility to venues. This ranking system helps her gauge an official's interest and availability to work in a specific league.

Ms. Gardner asked what differentiates the tiers, besides pay, and what do officials value the most when they rank the conferences. Ms. Williamson said for referees, the goal is to get to the NCAA tournament, just like it is for the teams. The referees sometime rank a league based on how many teams get in the tournament and how far those teams could go. She also mentioned that officials prefer leagues with a more respectful work environment.

When asked about assigning tournament officials, she said she always tries to get the best officials she can for each tournament and then determine how she can get them to and from a tournament location when many championships overlap on the same weekend. Ms. Gardner then pointed out she didn't see some of the tournament officials at all during the regular season and was concerned that some officials wouldn't know the different playing styles of teams in the league. Ms. Williamson said coordinators keep a grid that details how often each team has seen an official throughout the season.

Ms. Gardner then asked how Ms. Williamson and Ms. Stroud determine which officials work the conference tournament. In response, Ms. Williamson said they consider coaches' evaluations and ratings from the regular season and then work as early as possible to determine availability so they can potentially lock in officials for a specific tournament. Distance and proximity also play a role in who is assigned and how deep into the tournament that official may work since many of the officials work multiple championships in the southeast region on that championship weekend.

Ms. Carson asked where the SoCon ranks in pay compared to Ms. Williamson's other leagues. Of the nine leagues, the SoCon pay scale is estimated in the bottom third. She reminded the coaches that it's not just fees, but also about availability. She suggested hypothetically that if fees were higher some better referees might flip their league ranking and therefore might

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would work earlier and more often in the SoCon.

Ms. Williamson went on to discuss development and recruiting of new officials. She said more training opportunities will become available online. Ms. Williamson said she knows the website, OfficialHub, has experienced technical difficulties since its development so she praised those coaches that submitted evaluations. Ms. Williamson looks through the comments as well as the rankings, so she encouraged the coaches to offer feedback in the notes section. The system generates a score seen only by Ms. Williamson and Ms. Stroud and she said the more detailed the feedback, the better. She said instead of just writing "inconsistent", perhaps say "not enough whistles on travels tonight."

Having been a coach and referee and in administration for 13 years, Ms. Stroud reiterated that she looks at things from a coach's perspective, a player's perspective, a referee's perspective and an assigner's perspective. She stated that she saw 19 SoCon games in person, including all of the tournament games. According to her records, 910 correct calls and 145 no calls/incorrects were made during the season. The SoCon coaches submitted 63 videos for review, most of which concerned fouls. Ms. Stroud reminded the group that she did evaluate each tournament game and had discussions with the officials after each game. To assist in identifying trends, Ms. Williamson also uses a system called QwikRef to review foul calls and grade officials' performances as part of her year-end evaluations.

In conclusion, Ms. Williamson stated that that communication is key and that anything can be addressed respectfully. She encouraged the coaches to reach out to her and Ms. Stroud at any time and for any reasons.

**Action:**

**Informational.**

4. Topic:

Concerns for future.

Ms. Gardner said she was interested to hear what plans the conference is working on for the future so she can relay consistent information to her staff and players. Mr. Schaus said we must look at all possibilities around the COVID-19 virus, starting with what is happening on campuses. Discussions are ongoing with the ADs and will be ever evolving, beginning with cost-cutting measures, which have been decided, and next will be figuring out fall sports and practices, depending on the reopening of campuses. He acknowledged a relapse of the COVID-19 virus is possible and we must plan for that, too.

Jody Smith asked if any of the campuses were taking advantage of the optional practice. Ms. Gardner said Mercer's plan is to resume second summer sessions in person and was wondering how that will be handled if they are the only SoCon school in session. Doug King said the NCAA will not answer questions about when summer access can start. The temporary dead period through May 31 could be extended through June (he will find out on his call tomorrow). Right now, the NCAA is saying student-athletes can only do eight hours of non-athletic CARA. By Friday, there should be a decision and he will keep the group informed.

Ms. Kuhns asked about postseason awards and why we have an all-freshman team instead of a bigger first and second team (more than five players). Ms.

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Carson explained that when there was a third team (the media still has one), the coaches group thought 15 players was too many and it didn't feel as special to be recognized. Ms. Carson said she likes freshman getting recognized since we no longer award 'freshman of the week', however acknowledged that in the era of transfers it may be better that we don't recognize the freshman weekly, so they don't get recruited by bigger programs. Ms. Ezell asked if the group would be better served to make it a 'newcomer' team as opposed to just freshmen. Ms. Ezell agreed with Ms. Carson that the third team was weak and that the league has lacked stellar freshman lately. Mr. Garrity said the transfers usually make all-conference anyway, so he didn't think it was necessary. After consideration, the group tended to agree with Mr. Garrity and no action was taken.

**Action: Discussion.**

5. Topic:

Committee Reports.

a. NCAA DI Regional Advisory Committee – Susie Gardner

She told the coaches that the Regional Advisory Committee talks three times a year and that she always submits as many teams in consideration as she can but lately it has just been our champion.

b. NCAA WBB Ad Hoc Recruiting Group- Jackie Carson

Ms. Carson said July recruiting has effectively been cancelled since no coaching money can be spent. She asked if anyone had objections to a dead period in July (no objections) and then asked if anyone objected if there was a shutdown in August for a year. Ms. Burrows asked how visits would be affected if some states are open and others aren't. Ms. Carson said the committee discussed travel at great length. Ms. Patterson asked if there had been a discussion about coaches being able to watch the fall leagues and Ms. Carson said it is being discussed. Ms. Carson asked if people would be in favor of a September evaluation (for this year only) and Ms. Burrows said her administration would probably say no because of cost. Ms. Carson then asked if any coaches wanted to see August and September take the place of July and no one had an appetite for that. She then asked if anyone would be in favor of keeping spring home visits "virtual" for years to come (cost saving measure but also takes them out of homes so can protect those families but minimizes the personal aspect). Ms. Burrows asked if home or video visits could be optional depending on the situation. Ms. Carson said the committee thinks it would be hard to do that as the bigger schools would always recruit in person and thus have an advantage. Ms. Ezell said if it is for safety reasons and/or COVID-19, she is for it, but if it is because of cost cutting she would think it should be left up to each school. Ms. Ezell said it is too early to determine how COVID will be affecting things in a year and Mr. Hill agreed.

c. Top 25 Voting Poll – Jackie Carson

Ms. Carson continues to promote SoCon teams during the season.

d. Conference Captain – Trina Patterson

In her first year in this role, Ms. Patterson said the group had regular meetings at the beginning of the month. She said there were three focus topics from the WBCA: 1) Education – Power Hour for WBCA ended in May but you can still access the information; 2) All schools are encouraged to participate in the benevolence fund; 3) NCAA women's basketball moving from RPI to NET.

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She then said there is an ongoing affirmative action case at Harvard and the NABC and WBCA are encouraging coaches to read the brief and vote. She thanked the group for always offering feedback to pass along to the other Conference Captains. Ms. Patterson reminded the group July 31 is no recruiting and August 1 is the first time that schools can have camps.

6. Topic:

Conference Schedule 2020-21.

Mr. Cabe is planning to send out his draft of the 2020-21 schedule to ADs soon to be vetted and cross checked for campus availability, etc. Mr. Cabe reminded the group that with travel partners there will be stretches of 4-6 and 5-7 games on the road or at home which he tries to balance among the schools from year to year. He said the men's portion of the schedule comes in to play when schools factor in doubleheaders but that has gotten a little better with the men switching to Wednesday-Saturday and no longer having travel partners. Mr. Cabe said it hasn't come up yet, but he wouldn't be surprised if administrators wanted more doubleheaders as a staffing and cost saving measure. Mr. Hill asked for clarification on doubleheaders and Mr. Cabe said the league tries to limit them to two per school, but some schools have different thoughts and want more. Ms. Carson asked if the men would stick with their Wednesday-Saturday schedule and Mr. Cabe said yes, for at least another year, but that it has been a topic of discussion with the Ads recently. Ms. Patterson asked Mr. Cabe how the men's model worked with cost containment and Mr. Cabe said it may help a little, especially because of reduced hotel stays for the day in between contests. He said most of the cost containment would be specific to each institution. He reiterated that they should get their schedules soon. Conference schedule will run Jan. 7- Feb. 27 and every team will have two bye dates.

**Action:**

**Informational.**

7. Topic:

Sport Regulations. (Supplement II)

Ms. Arakas said that a general 'housekeeping' review of all sports regulations are done annually in the summer, updating information appropriately.

a. Location of game filming.

Mr. Hill stated that it is vitally important for the clock and score to be clearly seen on all film for coaches and officiating so filming should not be done behind the benches. Both Ms. Patterson and Ms. Carson said filming locations are dependent on gym set up. Mr. Cabe told the group that filming rules are described in 2.9 of the current sport regulations.

b. Time and Score.

Mr. Hill understands filming location issues but would really like the schools to make it a priority to show the score and time as much as possible. Ms. Williamson reinforced that time and score are important for her review of the game as well. Mr. Hill asked again to eliminate the DVD rule and the conference office staff will make that edit accordingly in the regs.

**Action:**

**Informational.**

8. Topic:

NET for WBB. (Supplement III)

Ms. Bradley briefed the group on the NET and explained that the NET will now replace the RPI in the tiebreaker procedures.

**Action:**

**Informational.**

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9. Topic: Other Business.
- Mr. Garrity asked about Synergy group rates increases, which will be \$7,500 and includes the base editor piece if we enter a league-wide arrangement (\$9500 without league-wide deal; additional cost for the max editor). Mr. Cabe said our conference agreement with Synergy expires this year. He informed the group that Hudl is now offering a new conference deal at \$3,500 per program. Mr. Cabe said we could negotiate a similar 3-year deal with Hudl, too, if the group wants a multi-year agreement. Mr. Cabe said the cost for the men programs is \$5,000 and \$6,500 because their system is anticipated to be more robust, at least in the beginning. Ms. Gardner said she doesn't want to be the first conference to adopt Hudl because she remembers how difficult it was to learn how to use Synergy. Mr. Hill asked if the men agreed to be guinea pigs, could wbb get a one-year delay? Ms. Carson agrees with proposing a one-year extension and is upset that Synergy's fee for next year has increased by \$1,400 over last year. Mr. Cabe told the group that Synergy has a new contact. He will send out contact info for both companies and ask for feedback from the coaches. If possible, he would like to hear from coaches before the end of month so he can present the group's opinion to ADs at the conference spring meetings.

Ms. Carson asked for the group to offer feedback on a few additional questions for her committee. She asked for feedback on a new recruiting model. If instead of using the current recruiting model, it switched to one weekend in April, one weekend in May and added June and two weekends in July (like the men), would coaches be okay with that? Ms. Carson said it would be a minimum of three days in April, May and June and minimum of 6 in July. Ms. Patterson prefers current model and Ms. Ezell, Mr. Garrity and Mr. Hill agreed. No one likes May or June and the group said they would need to know what is considered a 'weekend' before deciding thoughts on July.

**Action: Informational.**

10. Topic: Adjournment.
- Ms. Smith thanked the group and encouraged them to stay well and to stay in contact with their ADs and SWAs for the latest information during this uncertain time.
11. Topic: Meeting adjourned at 12:26 p.m. ET