

MINUTES

Softball Coaches of the Southern Conference

Southern Conference
Spartanburg, SC

Wednesday, August 14, 2019
11:00 AM ET

Those participating were:

Brad Irwin, ETSU
Kay Lennon McGrew, ETSU / Sport Committee Member
Wally King, Furman
Stephanie DeFeo, Mercer
Janelle Breneman, UNC Greensboro
Mandy Johnson, Samford
Jim Clift, Western Carolina
Mark Line, Wofford
Rodney Graves, Southern Conference Softball Official
Mickey Call, Coordinator of Officials
Jim Schaus, Southern Conference
Sue Arakas, Southern Conference
Doug King, Southern Conference
Hannah Bradley, Southern Conference
Eynde Frazier, Southern Conference
Stanley Broaden, Southern Conference

Absent:

Frank Reed, Chattanooga

1. Mr. Broaden called the meeting to order at 11:01 AM.
2. Topic: Commissioner's Remarks
Issue: Commissioner Schaus discussed the development of a long-term strategic plan for the Conference. The coaches were given the opportunity to provide feedback related to the strengths and positives of the conference as well as areas to improve. The group reflected on the SEC's rise and how the correlation to facilities has aided in their successes. Overall the coaches were pleased to see that the conference was continuing to trend upwards for the sport of softball.
Action: Informational.
3. Topic: NCAA Legislation/Compliance Update
Issue: Mr. King discussed a series of proposals acted on by the Division I Council during the 2018-19 Legislative Cycle. The group reviewed a select group of legislative concepts in the 2019-20 Legislative Cycle. Sponsors of concepts have until November 1, 2019 to submit a proposal based off the concept. All formally sponsored proposals will be distributed to the membership subsequent to the November submission deadline.
Action: Informational.
4. Topic: Future Schedules
Mr. Yaman initiated discussions on the 2022 conference schedule. The major change was including Wofford into the conference schedule as they intend to begin conference play starting in 2022. The addition of Wofford would eliminate bye weekends moving forward.
**Action: It was VOTED 7-0-1 (King-Johnson) (UTC Abstained).
"To approve the 2022 Conference Schedule as presented."**

5. Topic: Previous Minutes
 Issue: Review of the Softball Coaches' and Committee Meeting minutes from August 14, 2018. No changes or updates were recommended for the previous minutes.
 Action: **It was VOTED 6-0-1 (Johnson-Clift) (UTC Abstained).**
 "To approve the previous minutes as presented."
6. Topic: Coordinator of Officials' Report
 Issue: a. Review of 2019 Season - The 2019 season saw zero ejections. A select amount of Southern Conference Officials worked NCAA post-season events for the Divisions I and II Softball Championships.
 b. 2020 and 2021 Softball Major Rules Changes – Mr. Call reviewed major rules changes for the upcoming season. Starting in 2021, BAT compression testing will have to be completed during nonconference games. The Conference Office will work with Mr. Call to set up a follow up teleconference on rules changes that were unclear upon finishing the discussion.
 c. Evaluation – For the future, Mr. Call intends to solicit and provide a better exchange of feedback to the umpires.
 d. Video Replay – This was briefly discussed as an area to add to the championship. With this being very new, the coaches had no specific desire to implement immediately.
 Action: **Informational and Discussion.**
7. Topic: Sport Regulations
 Issue: a. Softball – Updates were made to the ejection and suspension policy. The Chancellors and Presidents recently approved the change to the ejection and suspension policy giving the commissioner discretion on the suspension should there not be an overarching NCAA rules for a suspension to be served. The previous regulation was an automatic suspension with compounding consequences for continued offenses. There was concerns as to when an individual removed from a contest, "ejected", would serve a suspension due to doubleheaders being played. Follow up information will be sent to the coaches at a later date. The newly adopted weather policy was discussed as well. Overall it provided more flexibility when managing incoming weather and completing as many games as possible. The group wishes to talk with Mr. Call to determine how late officials' can be notified of changes as the current deadline is still relatively early for making weather decisions.
 Action: **It was VOTED 6-0-1 (DeFeo-Breneman) (UTC Abstained).**
 "To approve the 2020 Softball sport regulations as presented."
8. Topic: Softball Sport Issues
 Issue: a. Changes in Championship Bracket – Mr. Reed (via email) presented the concept of changing the regulations for a championship that is unable to reach conclusion after it has been started (Conference Championship Regulations, 4.1.1.). Currently, if the championship is unable to be completed, the highest remaining seed in the will be declared the champion and receive the automatic qualifier bid. The recommendation would declare an undefeated team the champion and they would also receive the automatic qualifier.
 Action: **No formal action taken.**

Issue: b. Conference Scheduling- Change from two-day to three-day series – The coaches were all in favor of changing to a three-day series to limit overuse injuries and time spent competing on doubleheader days of competition. Mr. Irwin stated that this could impact budgets, but would require nonconference games/tournaments to be scheduled differently to accommodate this change when considering the budget impacts, missed class, travel expenses, etc.

**Action: It was VOTED 6-0-1 (Johnson-Clift) (UTC Abstained).
“To change the Conference schedule from two-day series to three-day series starting in 2021.”**

Issue: c. Alternate Field Specifications for Conference Championship – The coaches brought up concerns of alternate fields used at the championship. It was mentioned that the alternate field should match the specifications and expectations placed on the championship field. Ms. Breneman mentioned that UNC Greensboro secures NC A&T or Guilford College as an alternate site should weather impact the schedule. The UNCG field crew will also evaluate, monitor and repair the field as needed prior to the championship should an alternate field be needed. Ms. Arakas stated that this could be a section added to future bid documents.

Action: No formal action taken.

Issue: d. Neutral Site for Championship – Ms. Johnson presented having the championship hosted at a neutral site or moving to a rotational system that would allow all institutions an opportunity to host the championship. The coaches discussed a system that would allow all institutions to host and/or secure an alternate site or defer hosting to the next institution in line.

Action: No formal action taken.

Issue: e. Conference Expansion Opportunities – Ms. Johnson inquired about expansion opportunities with the mindset of the Conference not losing its automatic qualifier bid. Mr. Broaden stated that the Conference continues to monitor the pulse of conference realignment and membership needs. Ms. Arakas mentioned that the Conference will continue to do their best to maintain the AQ bid in Softball. Additionally, the group was reminded that Wofford would be adding softball in 2022.

Action: No formal action taken.

Issue: f. All-Conference Voting – Ms. Breneman initiated the discussion on the timing of the statistics received for the all-conference voting. It was stated that the group wished to have the compiled statistics sent after all of the games have been completed. The new timeline would be as follows: Monday – Request nominees, Wednesday – Nominations due back to conference office by noon EST, Thursday – Nominees sent without statistics, Sunday – Regular season ends. Ballots and info distributed to coaches, Monday – Completed ballots due back by 10 a.m. EST, Tuesday – All-conference awards announced and Wednesday – SoCon Championship begins. Ms. Bradley mentioned that this new timeline is going to require the coaches to return their ballots quicker based on the receipt of the final statistics. All coaches present did not foresee any issues with completing and submitting their ballots. The group discussed changing the position designation to infield and outfield while keeping the pitcher, catcher, DP and utility positions on the all-conference teams. Ms. Bradley intends to compare the utility criteria to that of the NFCA. The coaches mentioned the challenges with nominating for this position due to the Southern Conference criteria.

Action: It was VOTED 6-0-1 (Unanimous) (UTC Abstained).
“To remove position designations from the all-conference team and change it to the following: 4 First Team Infielders / 4 Second Team Infielders, 3 First Team Outfielders / 3 Second Team Outfielders, 2 First Team Pitchers / 2 Second Team Pitchers, 1 First Team DP/ 1 Second Team DP, 1 First Team Catcher / 1 Second Team Catcher and 1 First Team Utility / 1 Second Team Utility.”

Issue: g. All-Conference Voting Clarification – The coaches also discussed the need for individual on the preseason team to have played in the Southern Conference to be considered eligible for selection. It was mentioned that women’s soccer recently moved to this model.

Action: It was VOTED 6-0-1 (Unanimous) (UTC Abstained).
“To require student-athletes to have competed in the Southern Conference to be eligible for the preseason all-conference team.”

9. **Topic:** Other Business
Issue: Southern Conference 100th Anniversary – Ms. Arakas reminded the group that the Conference would be celebrating 100 years in 2021. A number of events and programming will take place as a part of the year-long celebration.

Action: **Informational.**

10. The teleconference adjourned at 2:54 PM.