NCAA Opening Round Structure

Purpose: To provide access for all eligible teams. Conference automatic qualifiers (AQ) and at-large teams (at least 50% of the bracket).

Qualification: Opening rounds are created when the number of eligible AQs is greater than 50% of the bracket. (e.g., 5 AQs in a 4-team bracket)

Principles:

➢ Opening round teams and match-ups shall be determined during the committee selection process.
➢ Opening round(s) are contested between the lowest ranked AQ teams (regardless of conference RPI).
  o Exception: Per bylaw 31.3.4.7.1, ‘…in sports other than men’s volleyball, men’s water polo and women’s water polo, the remaining 50 percent of the championship field shall be reserved for at-large teams.’
  o Therefore, in the championships listed above AQ and or at-large teams may participate in the opening round games.

➢ Opening round competition must be completed before the first scheduled round of the championship begins.

➢ Match-ups
  ❖ Opening round match-ups will be determined by geographic proximity.
  ❖ Higher seeded team will host provided they meet geographic and hosting requirements.

➢ Opening rounds will be treated equal to preliminary rounds.
  ❖ The NCAA will pay travel and per diem expenses for teams competing in the opening round(s).
  ❖ All statistics will be included in the championship statistics and records.
  ❖ Teams will be included in the championship program and on championship merchandise.
  ❖ Non-advancing participants will receive participant medallions.
  ❖ The NCAA will provide a basic signage package to each site.

➢ Opening rounds shall be scheduled at least two days prior to the subsequent round if at the championship site. There must be at least one-day rest/travel prior to the practice day of the subsequent round.
  ❖ The opening round(s) shall be scheduled at least three days prior to the subsequent round if it is not at the championship site.
Bracket assignments for teams advancing out of the opening rounds

- Placement in the bracket will be at the discretion of the sport committee; however, the committee must adhere to the following principles:
  - If the championship has preliminary rounds,
    - The advancing team(s) shall be placed in the bracket per geographic proximity which creates the least number of flights.
  - If the championship does not have preliminary rounds,
    - The advancing team(s) will be placed in the bracket on the appropriate seed line.

Hosting

- If the two teams in the opening round are within geographic proximity of each other but not within geographic proximity of the championship site:
  - The sports committee will determine the opening round host according to selection criteria and hosting requirements.

- If the two teams are within geographic proximity of the championship site, the following may be designated as the opening round site:
  - The committee may elect to conduct the opening round on campus of one of the participating teams.
  - The committee may elect to conduct the opening round at the championship site (provided the championship site is available).
  - If the opening round is held at the championship site, the non-advancing team(s) shall return home immediately following the opening round round.

Note: The intent is to have the opening round games hosted on campus of one of the participating teams; however, due to geographic proximity and missed class time host sites may be determined at the committee's discretion.