Purpose/Qualification:
Opening rounds are created when the number of eligible automatic qualifiers (AQ’s) is greater than 50% of the bracket (e.g. 9 AQ’s in a 16-team bracket), to provide access for all eligible teams.

Bylaw Reference:

- **31.3.4.7- Size of Championship Fields.** The size of all NCAA championships field shall be established by the Council to provide for efficient management of the events, adequate NCAA championship opportunities relative to the nationwide quality of competition and sound economic administration of the financial resources of the Association and its championships.

- **31.3.4.2 Requirements- National Collegiate Championship.** To be eligible for automatic qualification in a National Collegiate Championship, a member conference must meet the following general requirements: (Adopted: 1/9/06 effective 8/1/06)
  - Have at least six active members that sponsor the applicable sport in any division. (Note: A provisional member in the process of becoming an NCAA member cannot be used to meet the requisite number);
  - The six active members must have conducted conference competition together for the preceding two years in the applicable sport;
  - There shall be no waivers of the two-year waiting period; and
  - Any new member added to a conference that is eligible for an automatic bid shall be immediately eligible to represent the conference as the automatic qualifier.

- **31.3.4.7 Limitations on Automatic-Qualifying Positions.**
  - **31.3.4.7.1 Team Sports Other Than Men's Basketball.** In team sports, per Bylaw 31.3.4.6-(a), excluding football and any team sport in which automatic qualification is not offered, the sport committee must award, if a sufficient number of applications for automatic qualification exist, at least 50 percent of the championship field to conferences that meet automatic-qualification criteria and provide play-in criteria. 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. It will be the responsibility of the Council to determine if a conference play-in to a championship field is to be administered by the NCAA championships staff or by the member conference. (Adopted: 4/20/99, Revised: 11/1/07 effective 8/1/08, 4/28/11 effective 8/1/11, 8/7/14)

Principles:

- Play-in teams and match-ups shall be determined during the committee selection process.
- Play-in(s) are contested between the lowest ranked teams- AQ and/or at-large teams may participate in the play-in matches.
- Play-in competition must be completed before the first schedule round of the championship begins.
- Match-ups:
  - Play-in match-ups will be determined by geographic proximity.
  - The higher ranked team, per selection criteria, will host provided they meet geographic and hosting requirements.
- Opening round matches will be treated equal to preliminary rounds.
  - The NCAA will pay travel/per diem expenses for teams competing in the play-in(s).
  - All statistics will be included in the championships statistics and records.
  - Team will be included in the championship program and championship merchandise.
  - Non-advancing participants will receive participant medallions.
  - The NCAA will provide a basic signage package to the host for display.
Scheduling

- The opening rounds shall be scheduled at least three days prior to the subsequent round if it is not at the championship site.
- Opening rounds shall be scheduled at least two days prior to the subsequent round if taking place at the championship site.

Bracket assignment

- Placement in the bracket following the opening round matches will be at the discretion of the committee, using the below principles as their guide:
  - If the championship has preliminary round locations, the advancing teams shall be placed in the bracket per geographic proximity that creates the least flights.
  - If the championship does not have preliminary round locations, the advancing teams will be placed in the bracket on the appropriate seed line.

Hosting

- If teams are within geographic proximity to each other, but not he within geographic proximity to the championship site:
  - The sport committee will determine the opening round host(s) according to selection criteria and hosting requirements.
  - If a higher seeded team is not able to host, the opportunity will be given to the lower seed, given that they meet opening round hosting requirements.
- If teams are within geographic proximity of the championship site the following may be designated as the opening round site:
  - The sport committee may elect to conduct the opening round matches at campus sites of participating institutions.
  - The committee may elect to conduct the opening round matches at the championship site (provided the championship site is available).
  - If the opening round matches are held at the championship site, the non-advancing team(s) shall return home immediately following the play-in.

*Note: The intent is to have the opening round matches 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 based on the above principles.*

Women’s Bowling Automatic Qualifying Conferences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association</td>
<td>Allegheny Mountain Collegiate Conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Coast Conference</td>
<td>Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference</td>
<td>East Coast Conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast Conference</td>
<td>Mid-America Intercollegiate Athletic Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southland Conference</td>
<td>Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwestern Athletic Conference</td>
<td>Northeast Conference</td>
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