



**Recommendations on Year-Round Football Practice Contact for
College Student-Athletes
NCAA Division III Question and Answer Document**

(Updated May 4, 2017): The following question and answer document provides an updated summary outlining the process and governance meetings that have addressed the Interassociation Consensus Recommendations on Year-Round Football Practice Contact for College Student-Athletes. New and amended questions and answers are shaded to distinguish from the previously released question and answer document.

Updated summary and timeline.

On February 10-11, 2016, the NCAA Sport Science Institute conducted The Second Safety in College Football Summit. Among other things, that summit resulted in a consensus document: "Interassociation Consensus Recommendations on Year-Round Football Practice Contact for College Student-Athletes." Click [here](#) for the full consensus recommendations.

These recommendations serve to update the interassociation consensus guidelines published in 2014 that address contact in football practices throughout the year. The updated recommendations, which are endorsed by 16 medical organizations and five football organizations, are based on emerging scientific research and consensus. A draft of the recommendations was sent to all conference commissioners that sponsor football in November 2016 for review and feedback. The final recommendations were released January 17, 2017. While these recommendations impact the entire season, the immediate focus is on the preseason practice period. Specifically, the preseason recommendations are:

- Recommendation to discontinue two-a-day practices.
- Recommendation to increase the preseason by one week (beginning one week earlier). This requires a legislative change.
- Recommendation to reduce weekly live contact practices (tackling or thud) from four to three.
- Recommendation to ensure three noncontact or minimal contact practices per week.
- Recommendation to ensure noncontact or minimal contact practice the day following a scrimmage.
- Recommendation to add one day per week of no football practice.

Division III had existing legislation that specifically allowed two-a-day practices, thus directly conflicting with the first recommendation. Based on these recommendations and the conflict with the current legislation, NCAA staff asked membership groups, including the NCAA Division III Presidents Council, NCAA Division III Management Council, NCAA Division III

Presidents/Chancellors Advisory Group, conference commissioners and the NCAA Division III Football Committee to provide feedback on two potential actions for addressing this concern for the 2017 football season. Those two potential actions for consideration were:

1. Eliminate the option to conduct traditional two-a-day practices via noncontroversial legislation; and
2. Consider a blanket waiver to allow institutions to start preseason practice earlier if the institution determines additional time is necessary to account for the lost practices by implementing the preseason recommendations.

In addition to this outreach, the following is a timeline of membership and governance review of the two identified issues:

- February 16, 2017: Division III Football Committee teleconference.
- February 27, 2017: Division III Conference Commissioners teleconference.
- March 1, 2017: Division III Administrative Committee in-person meeting.
- March 28-29, 2017: Division III Football Committee in-person meeting.
- April 9, 2017: Division III Management Council Playing and Practice Seasons Subcommittee in-person meeting.
- April 10-11, 2017: Division III Management Council in-person meeting.
- April 25-26, 2017: Division III Presidents Council in-person meeting.
- April 27, 2017: NCAA Committee on Competitive Safeguards and Medical Aspects of Sports teleconference.
- May 4, 2017: Division III Management Council Subcommittee for Legislative Relief.

As an Association-wide issue, Divisions I and II considered these same topics. During the April governance meetings, all three divisions approved emergency or noncontroversial legislation to eliminate traditional two-a-day practices.

Both Divisions I and II approved blanket waivers to allow institutions to start football preseason practice early; Division II up to three days early and Division I up to seven days early. The

Division III Presidents Council approved a one-time blanket waiver to allow athletically related activities during the two currently legislated administrative days for the 2017 season. *(Legislatively, institutions may issue equipment and/or take team pictures the day before the first permissible practice date and may begin providing expenses the evening before the equipment issue day with an evening meal and lodging. The blanket waiver allows athletically related activities to occur on these days, but it does not extend when an institution may start providing expenses.)*

On April 27, 2017, at the request of the three divisional governance councils the CSMAS conducted a teleconference to discuss and clarify permissible activities relative to preseason and second session activities (e.g. walk-throughs), the recommended day off during preseason and weight lifting.

As a result of the May 4, 2017 CSMAS teleconference, the NCAA Division III Management Council Subcommittee for Legislative Relief approved a blanket waiver allowing more opportunities to conduct athletically related activities during the preseason period. Specifically, the waiver allows, after the acclimatization period: (1) the use of footballs during walk-through sessions; and (2) team meetings and film review to occur at any time except for the three-hour recovery period between the walk-through session and on-field practice session, regardless which is first.

Finally, the Playing and Practice Seasons Subcommittee is reviewing all preseason legislation in football to determine the best structure to allow institutions to implement the interassociation recommendations for the well-being of Division III student-athletes. The governance structure, along with constituent groups, will review relevant potential 2018 legislative proposals during the summer Management Council and Presidents Council meetings.

Questions and Answers

Recommendation to discontinue traditional two-a-day practices.

Question No. 1: With the recommendation to eliminate two-a-day practices, how would the remaining allowable activities be regulated?

Answer: Currently Division III Bylaw 17.10.2.3 governs what institutions may do during the football preseason practice period after the five-day acclimatization period. The only legislative change to that bylaw for the 2017 season would be the elimination of multiple on-field practice sessions on the same day. Therefore, the following would remain:

Hour limitation: No more than three hours of on-field practice activities per day [Bylaw 17.10.2.3-(b)].

Walk-through sessions: In addition to the three hour on-field practice, institutions may conduct a one hour walk-through session. The walk-through session may not include protective equipment or equipment specific to the sport.

Per a blanket waiver issued by the Subcommittee for Legislative Relief on May 4, 2017, the use of footballs during walk-through sessions that occur after the acclimatization period will be permissible for the 2017 season. Sprinting and competitive speed drills remain impermissible and the presence of the football does not change the speed of the walk-through. The use of protective equipment, including helmet and shoulder pads, also remains impermissible.

Recovery time: There must be at least three hours of recovery time between any session (e.g. on-field practice, walk-through, weight training). Student-Athletes may receive medical treatment and meals during this period, but no athletically related activities may occur during this three-hour recovery period. Per the May 4, 2017 Subcommittee for Legislative Relief blanket waiver, team meetings and film review are only prohibited during the three-hour recovery period between a walk-through session and on-field practice session, regardless which is first. Student-athletes may, however, engage in team meetings and film review during the three-hour recovery period between a weight training session and a walk-through session or on-field session.

Weight training: Current legislation states that weightlifting is "not considered an on-field activity....," [Bylaw 17.10.2.2-(b)]. However, the Year-Round Football Practice Contact Recommendations seek to minimize exertion in a second session of activity. For the best interests of student-athlete health and safety, strenuous activities, such as those that can occur with weightlifting, should be minimized or avoided completely. Institutional medical personnel should be consulted about appropriate activities in any second session of activity.

Weight training may not occur during the three-hour recovery period. CSMAS also reviewed the permissibility of weight training with respect to the interassociation consensus recommendations and concluded that weightlifting sessions are not considered conditioning sessions if conducted for the purpose of strength training and performed in a deliberate and controlled manner that is consistent with the concept of walking or jogging. Weightlifting activities designed to enhance cardiorespiratory fitness are considered conditioning and not permitted. Weightlifting sessions should be carefully planned and implemented only after consultation with a strength and conditioning professional and the primary athletics health care providers. The legislated three-hour recovery period must be observed between any two sessions as adequate student-athlete rest and recovery is paramount.

Other activities: Per the May 4, 2017 Subcommittee for Legislative Relief blanket waiver, team meetings and film review are only prohibited during the three-hour recovery period between a walk-through session and on-field practice session, regardless which is first. Student-athletes may,

however engage in team meetings and film review during the three-hour recovery period between a weight training session and a walk-through session or on-field session (See Bylaws 17.10.2.2-(b), 17.10.2.3-(d) and 17.10.2.3.1).

The following chart is intended to provide some guidance.

	On-Field Practice Session	Walk-Through Session	Recovery Time
Duration/Frequency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One per day. • No longer than three hours. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One per day. • No longer than one hour. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least three continuous hours between an on-field practice and a walk-through session or a weight training session.
Permissible Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice of any kind, including weight training or conditioning if part of a continuous session. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simulate plays and alignments with no protective or football-related equipment (e.g., helmets, shoulder pads, blocking sleds) other than footballs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical treatment. • Team meals. • Meetings, including film review.
Impermissible Activities		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice in any pads. • Live contact or live contact/thud practice. • Noncontact/minimal contact practice. • Conditioning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Athletically related activities, including practice of any kind. (<i>See 5/4/17 Blanket waiver referenced above for application to team meetings and film review</i>) • Conditioning. • Weightlifting.

Question No. 2: Would it be consistent with the guidelines to permit an institution to divide the team into groups and conduct the on-field practice sessions for each group at different times if each student-athlete only has one on field practice session per day?

Answer: Yes.

Question No. 3: Does this legislation change the calculation for determining the first permissible practice date?

Answer: No. The same method of counting back from the first contest as detailed in Bylaw 17.10.2.1 remains for the 2017 season. The Playing and Practice Seasons Subcommittee along with other governance entities are reviewing this bylaw for potential change in 2018.

Question No. 4: May a student-athlete participate in separate on-field practice sessions (e.g., defensive back group and wide receiver group) if the total continuous time does not exceed three hours?

Answer: Yes, provided the three hours spent in on-field practice (including any breaks) is continuous. For example, it would be permissible for a student-athlete to spend 1 to 2:15 p.m. with the defensive back group, break, and then return to on-field practice from 2:30 to 4 p.m. with the wide receiver group. This example is permissible because the total time from the start of on-field practice to the end of on-field practice is three continuous hours or fewer.

However, it would not be permissible for a student-athlete to engage in on-field practice with the defensive back group from 1 to 2:30 p.m., break, and then return for on-field practice with the wide receiver group from 4 to 5:30 p.m. This example is not permissible because the on-field practice activities do not occur within three continuous hours.

Recommendation to add one day per week of no football practice.

Question No. 5: Aren't Division III institutions already legislatively required to give their student-athletes a day off per week?

Answer: Division III student-athletes are legislatively required to have a day off per week when classes are in session. There is not a legislative requirement to provide a day off during the preseason period before classes have started. Therefore, this recommendation only applies during the preseason before classes have started.

Question No. 6: Is this recommendation legislated for the 2017 season?

Answer: No. Providing a day off during the preseason before classes are in session is not legislatively required.

Question No. 7: The legislatively required day off that applies after classes are in session prohibits any athletically related activity on that day. Is that standard the same for the recommended day off for the preseason practice period before classes are in session?

Answer: No. The recommended day off for the preseason period before classes are in session is intended to provide the student-athlete rest and recovery including mental rest and recovery. The intent underlying this recommendation is to prohibit football related activity during this day off. Therefore, conducting activities such as leadership training, entertainment, team building and community service on the day off during the preseason before classes have started would be consistent with the recommendations, provided those activities don't also include football related activities. CSMAS reviewed this issue during its April 27, 2017, teleconference and agreed that conducting team meetings and film review during this day is consistent with the day off recommendation. Conducting any physical football-related activity, however, including weight training and conditioning would not be consistent with the day off recommendation.

Blanket Waiver allowing institutions to conduct football practice on the two administrative days.

Question No. 8: What does the blanket waiver accomplish?

Answer: Currently institutions may issue football equipment and take team pictures on the day prior to the first permissible practice date. Institutions may start providing expenses on the evening before the equipment issue day. However, athletically related activity may not occur on either of those two days. The blanket waiver allows institutions to conduct athletically related activities on the equipment issue day as well as the day before. The waiver does not however change when an institution may provide expenses. Thus, institutions may first start providing expenses with an evening meal and lodging on the evening before the equipment issue day.

Question No. 9: What type of athletically related activities may be conducted on those two administrative days?

Answer: Institutions may engage in team meetings, film review and weight training. If the team engages in an on-field activity then it must comply with the acclimatization requirements (Bylaw 17.10.2.2) including applying three-hour recovery periods.

Question No. 10: Does this waiver change the calculation for the first permissible start date?

Answer: No, the waiver does not change the calculation for the first permissible start date. Institutions will still utilize the counting method outlined in Bylaw 17.10.2.1. (See *Question No. 3*)

Question No. 11: May an institution provide expenses to student-athletes prior to the two administrative days?

Answer: No. The waiver does not extend the provision of expenses. Therefore, institutions may still only provide permissible expenses starting with the evening before the equipment issue day.

Question No. 12: May an institution conduct conditioning, speed, strength or agility tests prior to the start of the five-day acclimatization period?

Answer: No.

Blanket Waiver allowing, after the acclimatization period, the following: (1) the use of footballs during walk-through sessions; and (2) team meetings and film review to occur at any time except for the three-hour recovery period between the walk-through session and on-field practice session, regardless which is first.

Question No. 13: May student-athletes use footballs during walk-through sessions?

Answer: Yes, this waiver allows student-athletes to use footballs during walk-through sessions. It remains impermissible, however, to wear protective equipment (e.g., helmets, shoulder pads) or use other equipment related to football (e.g., blocking sleds).

Question No. 14: Could weight training occur during the three-hour recovery period?

Answer: No.

Question No. 15: May student-athletes use footballs during walk-through sessions that occur during the acclimatization period?

Answer: No. The waiver only applies to the preseason period after the acclimatization period.