



David A Benjamin
Executive Director

Dear NCAA Division III Management Council:

I am writing on behalf of the Division III members of the Intercollegiate Tennis Association (ITA), to explain our opposition to the proposal to move the women's NCAA Division III Tennis Championships from the spring to fall semester.

In early December, at the suggestion of our ITA Division III Operating Committee, we put together an online survey about this proposal, to gather a broad based response from our Division III member coaches. The survey was modeled after the NCAA Division III Championships Committee survey that was distributed to all athletic directors and SWA's.

A total of 163 coaches responded to the ITA survey, representing 234 men and women's tennis programs. (Please note that we surveyed the men's programs as well as the women's, given the fact that a change in the Women's Championships could result in a similar impact on the men's side.) Over 82% of these respondents expressed a desire to keep the NCAA Championships during the spring semester, with 81% of women's programs in favor of a spring championship. Further analysis of the survey data by NCAA Regions reveals that 96% of the respondents in the West region, 86.5% of the respondents in the Atlantic South region and 83% of the respondents in the Northeast Region, favor the current structure. The Central region respondents display the lowest percentage of programs in favor of the current structure, with 72% in favor of a spring championship.

It is clear from these survey results that there is an overwhelming desire on the part of most Division III coaches to keep the tennis Championships in the traditional spring season. A fundamental basis for opposing a move to the fall is that college tennis is an outdoor sport, with team competition always taking place during the spring semester, ever since the NCAA first sponsored tennis as a collegiate sport. Some of the other concerns expressed by our Division III women's membership include:

1. Division III women's tennis would be the only college tennis division **NOT** playing a spring championship, therefore separating it and making it different from Division I and II men and women and Division III men. This would be a tremendous disadvantage for Division III women's programs and create recruiting disadvantages due to a different season and compacted competitive opportunities. It is likely that Division III would lose good players since it would be the only college tennis division not offering a meaningful

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winter/spring playing option to the student-athletes. Furthermore, this change would create inequity between Division III men and women's program offerings, which would have to be addressed. To our knowledge, in no other Division III sponsored sport, where a men's and women's equivalent exists, are the NCAA Championships held at different times of the year.

2. Player development would be impacted for Division III women's tennis since there would be much less incentive and opportunity to compete in the winter and/or spring. With the championship in the fall, some student-athletes may decide not to compete in the winter/spring segment, which will negatively impact the training and recruiting cycles for many programs and players.
3. Practice and competition opportunities now exist in the fall, winter and spring. This is the same for men and women's tennis in all divisions and junior colleges. Playing a fall championship would not eliminate the winter and spring seasons but it would dramatically diminish the importance of them, and therefore the motivation for student-athletes to work hard or even play in the winter and/or spring. Now colleges can choose and designate their "weeks" into two segments according to what is best for their players, school, facilities and climate and have it all build toward the championship (as opposed to having some weeks occur after the championship).
4. Playing all matches and tournaments in the fall (compacted season) rather than spreading them between the fall and winter/spring, especially in colder climates, would likely increase missed class time. Using fall and spring weeks, culminating with a spring championship, is much more competitively and academically balanced for the teams.
5. Division III women's players and teams participation in the ITA Regional and National Championships program could be impacted.
6. There are many colleges in the Northeast and Central regions that experience the same bad weather in the late fall as in the early spring. Playing dual matches, tournaments, conference championships, NCAA first and second rounds, and the NCAA championships in the fall will move a significant number of matches indoors due to inclement weather (making it even harder for those schools without indoor courts). Playing split seasons in these climates allows more matches to be played outside. Unlike tennis, other fall sports (soccer, cross country, etc.) can be held during bad weather. Moving tennis to the fall removes it from the training and competition seasons utilized by all other divisions.
7. NCAA tennis (and the national championship) is recognized as an outdoor sport. Moving the event to the fall forces the final site host (top 8 teams & individual championship) to be located in the West or the Atlantic South regions. Even hosting the first and second rounds in the Northeast and Central regions would have to be indoors, thus increasing the cost and reducing location options. This is a big concern for these regions, given the bracket expansion in 2007 with the realization of AQ's.

8. Moving to the fall championship would force all conferences that currently play in the spring to change their seasons. Under current NCAA guidelines, conferences determine when to conduct their championships.
9. Some conferences that currently conduct women's fall championships are considering a change to the spring with the implementation of the AQ. Electing to move a conference championship to the spring resolves the dilemma of having a fall conference champion represent the conference during the spring NCAA Championship. However, the current structure allows each conference to determine their championship dates.
10. A fall championship might require many more colleges to provide pre-season for tennis student-athletes to return to school earlier for pre-season training, and this would add to the cost of these programs.

In closing, we strongly believe that it will work best to allow each conference to identify women's tennis as a fall or spring sport, relative to their geographic needs, and recommend that the NCAA Division III Women's Championships remain in the traditional, spring season.

Yours truly,



David A Benjamin
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Intercollegiate Tennis Association

CC: NCAA Division III Championship Committee
ITA Division III Operating Committee