The Redshirt – What does it mean? The word “redshirt” is mentioned once in the entire NCAA Manual and it is never defined.

Every student-athlete at BC has five years from the time they enroll in classes full-time for the first time in order to complete four years of eligibility. If you use up those four years of eligibility in your first four years of college, then that’s all you get. If you don’t play until your fifth year of college, you only get to play one season.

The absence of a definition notwithstanding, a student-athlete redshirts when they do not participate in any intercollegiate competition during a given academic year. The main reason for purposely redshirting a student-athlete is to preserve a year of their eligibility. The moment a student-athlete competes for a single second of time or a single play, they will use up one of their four years of eligibility. “Intercollegiate competition” includes any contests against outside competition, regardless of how the competition is classified (e.g., scrimmages, exhibitions, etc.). (NCAA Bylaw 14.02.6).

Two exceptions to outside competition (you can still redshirt under these two exceptions):

1) In Women’s Volleyball, Men’s Soccer, Women’s Soccer, Field Hockey, and Men’s Water Polo, a student-athlete may compete during their team’s non-traditional season without using a year of competition, so long as they were academically eligible during their team’s traditional season. (Bylaw 14.2.3.1.2)

2) During a student-athlete’s initial year of enrollment at BC, they may compete in preseason exhibition contests and preseason practice scrimmages without counting such competition as a season of competition. (Bylaw 14.2.3.1.3) This would apply in the sports of Field Hockey, Soccer and Basketball.

The Hardship Waiver – Not to be confused with the redshirt is the hardship waiver, which is commonly, but incorrectly, referred to as the medical redshirt. A “medical redshirt” does not exist.

On occasion, a student-athlete may have competed and used a year of eligibility, but because of an incapacitating injury/illness, he/she may be granted a hardship waiver and receive an additional year of eligibility. In order for this to happen, the following criteria must be satisfied:
1) the injury/illness is a season-ending injury;
2) the injury/illness occurs prior to the first competition of the second half of the season
3) the injury/illness occurs when the student-athlete has not participated in more than the greater of three contests/dates of competition or 30% of the team’s scheduled contests/dates of competition during the team’s traditional season. (Bylaw 14.2.4)

Along with contemporaneous medical documentation, this injury/illness information is provided to the conference office, where the decision on granting/denying the additional year of eligibility is rendered.

The Difference – If a student-athlete competes, he/she will use a year of competition and not be eligible for a redshirt year. However, if he/she competes and subsequently suffers a season-ending injury/illness, he/she may be eligible to receive a hardship waiver.