

**BIG SKY CONFERENCE**  
**2491 WASHINGTON BLVD, SUITE 201**  
**OGDEN, UT, 84401**

**CONTACT: JON KASPER**  
**ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER/MEDIA RELATIONS**  
**801.392.1978 x-16**  
**[jkasper@bigskyconference.org](mailto:jkasper@bigskyconference.org)**



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## **BIG SKY ANNOUNCES 2012-13 CHAMPIONSHIP DATES, FORMATS**

**OGDEN, UTAH (June 4, 2012)** - In less than a month, the Big Sky Conference will officially welcome Southern Utah University and the University of North Dakota as full members, and also admit UC Davis and Cal Poly as football affiliate members.

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The additions will bring the Big Sky to 11 full members and 13 football-playing schools. Four of the original six charter members of the league – Idaho State University, The University of Montana, Montana State University and Weber State University - still call the Big Sky Conference home. Northern Arizona, which joined the league in 1970, gives the Big Sky five members with at least 40 years of continuous membership.

The upcoming expansion means plenty of changes for the upcoming intercollegiate athletic season.

For the first time, the Big Sky will sponsor a championship in women's softball. Idaho State, North Dakota, Northern Colorado, Portland State, Sacramento State, Southern Utah, and Weber State currently field teams. The University of Montana has plans to add the sport.

The first Big Sky softball championship will be played May 9-11 at the site of the regular-season champion. The top four teams will advance to the postseason tournament. The winner will earn an automatic bid to the NCAA Championship. During the regular season, the teams will play a single round-robin format. The squads are slated to play each other three times with a doubleheader on Friday, followed by a single game on Saturday.

In football, teams will continue to play an eight-game conference schedule. Each team will play a two "rivals" each season, and rotate through the remaining teams. A tiebreaker format has been formulated to determine who will earn the league's automatic bid to the Division I Football Championship.

The men's and women's basketball championships will become seven-team tournaments, one more than the previous format. Both tournaments will be played March 14-16 at the site of the respective regular-season champion. The No. 1 seed will earn a bye to the semifinals on Friday. During the past decade, the men's tournament had a Saturday, Tuesday-Wednesday format with the regular-season champion hosting the semifinals and championship.

During the regular-season, men's and women's basketball teams will continue to play each team in the league twice, bringing the total number of conference games from 16 to 20 for each squad. The top seven men's and women's team will qualify for the Big Sky Championship.

The volleyball and tennis championships will add more teams.

Volleyball will return to a six-team format, as it was from 1996-2008. The championship will continue to be played at the site of the previous regular-season champion. The 2012 championship will be held at Northern Colorado's Butler-Hancock Sports Pavilion. The tourney will be played Nov. 23-24 with quarterfinal matches on Friday morning, followed by semifinal matches in the evening. Volleyball will continue to play a double round-robin regular-season format. Like basketball, volleyball will play 20 conference matches.

Tennis will also return to a six-team format. The championship will be played April 26-28, 2013 at the Gold River Racquet Club in Gold River, Calif.

Soccer will remain a four-team championship. It will be played either Nov. 1, 3, or Nov. 2, 4 at the site of the regular-season champion. Soccer will continue to play a single round-robin regular-season schedule. With the addition of Southern Utah and North Dakota, squads will now play nine conference matches.

Cross Country, indoor and outdoor track and field, and golf will continue to send all teams to championships. The cross country championship is Oct. 27 in Flagstaff, Ariz. Bozeman will play host to the indoor championship Feb. 22-23, 2013. The outdoor championship will be May 8-11, 2013 in Portland, Ore.

The golf championship will remain at the Ocotillo Golf Resort in Chandler, Ariz. For the second consecutive year, the golfers will play competitive rounds on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday. The dates are April 21-23, 2013.

On July 16 in Park City, Utah, the Big Sky Conference will unveil its new logo.

## 2012-13 Big Sky Championship Schedule

<b>Sport</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Locatation</b>	<b>Teams Competing</b>
Cross Country	Oct. 27	Flagstaff, Ariz.	11
Soccer	Nov. 1, 3 or Nov. 2, 4	Regular-Season Champion	4
Volleyball	Nov. 23-24	Greeley, Colo.	6
Indoor Track & Field	Feb. 22-23	Bozeman, Mont.	11
Men's Basketball	March 14-16	Regular-Season Champion	7
Women's Basketball	March 14-16	Regular-Season Champion	7
Golf	April 21-23	Chandler, Ariz. Ocotillo Golf Resort	11
Tennis	April 26-28	Gold River, Calif. Gold River Racquet Club	6
Outdoor Track & Field	May 8-11	Portland, Ore.	11
Softball	May 9-11	Regular-Season Champion	4