



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



FACEBOOK.COM/BIGSKYCONF



TWITTER.COM/BIGSKYCONF

LEAGUE TO EXPLORE BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP STRUCTURE

GRAND FORKS, N.D. (June 4, 2014) - The Big Sky Conference will review its current men's and women's basketball championship model and explore an alternate structure, which could include a predetermined location, the league announced Wednesday at the conclusion of its spring meetings.

"Over the next several months, school administrators and conference staff will diligently work to assess which format makes the most logistical and financial sense, and that could be a predetermined location," said Big Sky Conference Commissioner Doug Fullerton. "This is a major philosophical change for the conference, and there are many issues to study before we take a formal proposal back to the presidents."

Historically, the regular-season champion on the men's and women's side has hosted the conference championship. This past season, the men's tournament was held at Weber State University in Ogden, Utah. The University of North Dakota hosted the women's tournament in Grand Forks.

"While our current format often leads to strong attendance and does a great job of protecting our top team, we also realize it has become problematic for many reasons," Fullerton said. "Our school administrators and coaches have raised valid concerns, including travel costs, travel logistics, student-athlete welfare, and fan experience. We need to continue to have discussions regarding how many teams will qualify, and if we move to a predetermined site, where that will be and if the location will be the same for the men and the women."

Any potential changes would not go into effect until March of 2016.

The 2015 Big Sky Conference men's and women's championships will be held at the site of the regular-season champions on March 12-14. With the addition of the University of Idaho on July 1, 2014, as a member in all sports but football, the league will have 12 men's and women's basketball programs. The 2015 tournaments will feature eight teams with no byes. Four quarterfinals will be played on Thursday, followed by two semifinal games on Friday, and the championship game on Saturday.

The conference will sponsor a men's golf championship in the spring of the 2015. Men's golf is returning as a championship sport in the Big Sky for the first time since 2002. Idaho, North Dakota, Northern Colorado, Southern Utah, Sacramento State and Weber State all sponsor men's golf. All but Idaho, which played men's golf in the WAC, were previously affiliate with the America Sky men's golf league.

The league also announced that it has accepted the University of Hartford and Binghamton University as affiliate men's golf members. Both institutions were previously members of the America Sky.

"The addition of Hartford and Binghamton will allow us a buffer in terms of overall numbers for men's golf in the Big Sky," Fullerton said. "What it amounts to is those two institutions competing for three days in the Big Sky championship, under the agreement that the championship will always be held in the West. Those teams helped many Big Sky programs sustain men's golf by joining the America Sky. Now that we have a championship, we are extending the courtesy back to them."

The 2015 Big Sky Conference men's golf championship will be played in late April or early May at a site to be announced. The league also announced the rest of its 2014-15 championship dates. The cross country championship featuring 12 teams will be hosted by the University of North Dakota in Grand Forks on Saturday, Nov. 1.

The women's soccer championship is November 6-9 at the site of the regular-season champion. For the first time, it will include six teams. There will be an off day prior to the championship match.

The eight-team volleyball championship will be held Nov. 20-22 at the site of the regular-season champion. Volleyball will be split into two six-team divisions for the regular season. Squads will play each team in their division twice, each team in the other division once, creating 16 conference matches. The North Division will include Eastern Washington, Idaho, North Dakota, Montana, Montana State and Northern Colorado. Idaho State, Northern Arizona, Portland State, Sacramento State, Southern Utah, and Weber State will be in the South Division.

Northern Arizona University will play host to the indoor track and field championship in Flagstaff on Feb. 26-28.

The men's and women's basketball championships are slated for March 12-14 at the site of the regular-season champion. Men's and women's basketball teams will play 18 conference games in a one-division format.

The women's golf championship will once again be contested at the Ocotillo Golf Resort in Chandler, Ariz., on April 19-21.

Sacramento State will serve as the host of the men's and women's tennis championships at the Gold River Racquet Club April 24-26. It will feature six teams.

The league's third softball championship will be held on May 7-9 at the home of the regular-season champion.

The outdoor track and field championship will be in Cheney, Wash., at Eastern Washington University May 13-15.