

**2014 National Fastpitch Coaches Association Convention**  
**Softball Summit Minutes**  
**December 5, 2014 | Bally's Las Vegas | Las Vegas, Nevada**

The Softball Summit, chaired by outgoing NFCA Division II Board Representative Bill Gray (Missouri Southern), (filled in for NFCA Past President Patrick Murphy, Alabama), is an open forum sharing where softball issues can be debated with coaches from all membership groups participating.

Prior to the summit beginning, NFCA First President Pat Conlan (Georgetown), presented the Donna Newberry Perseverance Award to Notre Dame head coach Deanna Gumpf.

The summit meeting was called to order at 1:40 p.m.

- I. Welcome** – Mr. Gray welcomed every to the Softball Summit and explained rules of order to those in attendance.

\* Members are required to wear their credentials and show respect to their colleagues. Within debate, please show respect to your colleagues, be courteous and be a good representative of your professional organization. They were asked to remember the two-minute speaking max, but members were told they could discuss anything. Speakers may not speak to the same topic more than once without permission of the membership. Members must disclose their name, school and affiliation. Robert's Rules of Order would be the guidelines for discussion.

- II. Membership presentations** – Mr. Gray opened the proceedings and announced that each level or division would present its topics from their respective caucus meetings.

**III. Cal JC** – Darci Brownell (Sierra College)

- a. Cal JC can now recruit in the entire state of California as of July 1, 2014. Before we had to stay in a 20 mile area
- b. In 2007, Cal JC sports went into a cost containment process for all post-season play. Our championship was cut from an elite 8 to a final 4. In 2007 we were told this would last until July 2014 and then we would go back to 8 teams. That didn't happen, so we are asking NFCA coaches who recruit Cal JC players to email a Cal JC coach and an request that we go back to 8 teams so they do not waste a recruiting trip on only 4 teams. We are going to flood the CCCAA with the emails from the NFCA coaches. (I have received a lot of emails from coaches since the conventions).

**IV. Division II** – Don Kennedy (Missouri S&T)

- a. Thanked Bill Gray for his service and leadership as our Representative on the NFCA Board.
- b. As a caucus, we passed motions to create two awards, the DII National Player of the Year award and the DII National Freshman of the Year award. There were time lines for each award and the All-Region/All-American Committee will be responsible for determining the award winners. Thanked Diane Baker and Schutt for sponsoring the awards.

- c. During our caucus, we split into four sharing groups discussing the following topics: Team Chemistry, Recruiting – techniques and approach, Community Service – ideas and what your team does, and Ways to Improve DII.

**V. NAIA - Hal Wynn (Faulkner University)**

- a. Discussed trying to get more of our membership to become members of the NFCA to enjoy those benefits and more importantly make more awards available to their student-athletes.
- b. Talked about changing the format of our national tournament. Currently we have forty teams going to ten sites with the winners converging at a national championship site. We are considering taking all forty to one site to help make it more of a championship environment for our student athletes. At the same time it will be more economical for teams and will encourage cities to bid on hosting this tournament due to the economical impact it would have on that city.
- c. Mandatory drug education at its institutions
- d. Starting in 2016, it will have mandatory drug testing at its national championships.

**VI. Division 3 – Kris Herman (Williams College)**

- a. Division III membership talked in its caucus about starting a divisional mentoring program similar in nature to The Mentoring Session held each year at convention. Those Division III coaches with five years or more experience were asked to serve as mentors, while those coaches with less experience were asked to sign up as mentees by January 2. Ms. Pepin will pair mentees with mentors.
- b. The group also discussed adding a HCC for Division III. The HCC would include one person from each Division III conference and would have a monthly or bimonthly conference call to discuss items of interest to Division III. A four-person subcommittee was formed to explore this project.
- c. NCAA Assistant Director of Championships Jan Gentry presented her annual caucus review of the Division III Championship and spoke about new NCAA legislation, scheduling, team alignments and the championship selection and tournament process. She and Division III Softball Committee chair Robin Baker, the head coach at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, held an informative optional mock ranking exercise for those who wanted to see how teams are determined.
- d. NCAA Softball Secretary-Rules Editor Dee Abrahamson and National Umpire Coordinator Donna Vavrinec gave their annual presentation about NCAA rules and officiating.
- e. Ms. Herman started a discussion about the proposal to reduce the softball schedule by 10 percent and the procedure for on-campus tryouts for potential student-athletes.

**VII. NJCC - Tommy Ramos (Midland)**

- a. Coaches wanting more input with the NJCAA especially when it comes to the national tournament. We would like to change the format of the national tournament.
- b. Changing the total number of the softball Polls for all DI, DII and DIII junior colleges. Also when they begin and finish.
- c. Discussed how well the NJCAA All Star team played in the Canadian Open. They were invited back for next summer's games.
- d. Establishing a dialogue with NCAA DI and DII universities when speaking or recruiting a junior college player at mid-term.

#### VIII. Division I – Natalie Poole (Memphis)

- a. Division I's partnership between the WCWS and Oklahoma City is extended until 2035 as long as Oklahoma City fulfills their expansion and facility improvement plan.
- b. I appreciate all of the hard work that each working group member has committed to the research, creation, and development of ideas and possible proposals which we believe will help the sport of softball at the Division I level.
- c. Recruiting Calendar
  - i. There was unanimous desire for change to the current calendar
  - ii. Below are the agreed upon parts of the calendar
    - 1. Elimination of 50 recruiting dates
    - 2. Fall recruiting on Saturdays and Sundays only
    - 3. Quiet Period: The day after the first weekend in August until
    - 4. Fall Recruiting Period: Six Weekends counting back from Thanksgiving
    - 5. Quiet Period: The Day after Thanksgiving until the Thursday
    - 6. Following the WCWS - Summer Recruiting Period: The Thursday following the completion of the WCWS until the end of the first weekend in August
  - iii. This will not go into effect until 2016-17 pending the NCAA legislative process and approval.
  - iv. Our next charge is to make sure camps/clinics are included during the summer and fall windows (this would include institutional/non-Institutional camps)
- d. Certification of Recruiting Events
  - i. We have been discussing the desire to have better structure at recruiting events to aid in improved efficiency
  - ii. This does not limit the number of tournaments held on a weekend, how much money is made, who the money goes to, etc.
  - iii. This will help coaches get all of the appropriate information for the athletes as well
  - iv. In a straw vote, 75% were in favor of looking into this further
- e. Slowing the Early Recruiting Process Down
  - i. Working on forming legislation to stop the recruiting conversations so early
  - ii. The potential legislation created that we are building on:
    - \* **There shall be no recruiting contact (unofficial visits, phone calls, text messages, recruiting conversations at camp) with a PSA until July 1**

**after their sophomore year of high school. There shall be no contact with a third party (high school coach, club coach, friend, teacher, etc.) regarding unofficial visits/scholarship offers. We would like to move the official visit to their Junior year with the same current parameters (13.6.2.2.1 and 13.6.3).**

iii. This led to five straw votes

1. No recruiting with PSA's or other coaches until July 1 after their sophomore year; 95% yes; 5% no
2. Propose that recruiting conversations take place at camps with sophomores or younger; 95% yes; 5% no
3. Propose to allow official visits during the Junior year; 90% yes; 10% no
4. Propose to put scholarship offers in writing beginning July 1 after their Sophomore year; 20% yes, 10% no (small sample)
5. Propose that the NLI is moved to the Junior year; 20% yes; 80% no

f. One-Time Transfer Rule

i. The question is whether we as a sport want to be exempt from the one-time transfer exception. It means if a student athlete transfers they could receive athletic aid, practice, but not compete against outside competition for a year. The purpose is to better support the idea of slowing the recruiting process down.

1. In a straw vote, 90% voted in favor of wanting an athlete to sit out the year from competition, 10% against

f.

g. Moving the Season Back

- i. We began looking into this topic because February is winter and it is difficult to find consistent mild weather to compete anywhere in the country.
- ii. ESPN, at this point, is requesting that we do not go this route because of potential programming conflicts.
- iii. We need to decide if we want to push through regardless of television, or look into different options, such as limiting the number of games or weeks on the front end of the season.

## **IX. Travel Ball – Kevin Shelton (Texas Glory)**

a. Recruiting Window

1. The travel ball coaches are “adamantly opposed” to no fall window, but as a group supports the idea of a shorter window of events where college coaches could evaluate
2. They like the idea of the window being from October 1 to Thanksgiving versus the six weeks before Thanksgiving because it would help those in weather-impacted areas.

3. They are OK with the reduced window as long as September and December don't turn into "college camp fests." It was felt by the group that the activity outside the allowed recruiting window would be moved to college campuses resulting in recruits and their families spending a lot more money (on college camps).
  4. One concern was the unintended consequence would be helping the "travel ball haves" or better teams getting the better fields because there would be few elite events.
  5. Regarding certifying events, "everyone but one (coach)" was against this. It was said that, "basketball events are certified, but there hasn't been a positive impact on those events."
- b. Early Recruiting
1. The travel coaches were in support of the proposed idea of no recruiting contact or visits before July 1 after the sophomore year. A vote was in favor of this.
  2. The primary concern was the language that would be around an offer given after July 1 so it would be understood by all. It was felt by the club coaches that if a player can't get a scholarship offer until after July 1 of the sophomore year "it would make a big difference."
- c. Standards & Measurables
1. Regarding testing athletes at events so there is a standardization of measurable such as home-to-first speed, it was stated that "TCS (Triple Crown Sports) and PGF (Premier Girls Fastpitch) are working on this and everyone sees it as a positive."

## **X. High School – Carrie Austgen (Deer Park HS / Texas)**

- a. Major goal to increase membership
- b. High School Focus Groups
  1. Regional Leader with State Leaders
  2. To gather information like State Tournament dates, State Coaching Organizations, Coaching Schools and contact people
- c. Inform High School coaches that the NFCA is the Think Tank of Fastpitch Softball

d. Inform High School Coaches that NFCA is available. I have a new assistant that has been coaching for over 30 years and didn't know we existed nor was there a convention.

e. Increase connections between High School and College Teams

1. If I had to do it over again, I would have done a better job Contacting HS Coaches when I was a JC Coach

f. Suggested College Coaches make two connections a month

1. For example: Contact two on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of each month. Whether its via email, Linked In, or another venue. Just to say hi and explain how the NFCA is a great organization.

XI. Mr. Gray announced that summit attendees now have the floor to ask questions or make statements first starting with Cal JC. He went through the order of each group's presentations and there were no questions or comments. Meeting was adjourned at 2:08 p.m.