Protocol decided for sickle cell testing

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By Michelle Brutlag Hosick

The Division I Legislative Council decided that all Division I student-athletes must be tested for sickle cell trait, show proof of a prior test or sign a waiver releasing an institution from liability if they decline to be tested. The new rule will be in effect for the 2010-11 academic year.

The original legislation requiring all student-athletes to be tested before participating in athletically related activities was sponsored by Conference USA as part of a settlement between Rice and the parents of a football student-athlete whose death was tied to sickle cell trait. A subsequent version allowed institutions to accept documented evidence of a prior test in place of completing the testing themselves. The Ivy League then sponsored an amendment allowing student-athletes to decline the test.

Legislative Council chair Joe D’Antonio said the Council’s action provides the greatest flexibility both for member institutions and student-athletes.

Allowing student-athletes to decline the test addresses concerns that student-athletes who test positive for the trait might be denied opportunities. The National Athletic Trainers’ Association encourages institutions to screen incoming student-athletes. The NATA advocates a slow buildup of conditioning activities and frequent rest-and-recovery periods for all student-athletes because this approach can reduce adverse effects caused by sickle cell trait and is also a healthier approach overall.

Sickle cell trait can change the shape of red blood cells during intense or extensive exertion, causing a blockage in blood vessels and rapid breakdown of muscles, including the heart. Initial tests for the trait are inexpensive at about $5 a test, though follow-up testing can be more expensive.

The Council also addressed several other pieces of legislation remaining in the 2009-10 cycle. The Council:

- Adopted Proposal No. 2009-103. The Big 12-sponsored legislation defines a “deserving team” for the purposes of bowl selection as one that has at least a .500 record against Football Bowl Subdivision opponents. Non-equity FBS conferences strongly opposed the new rule as unfair to smaller leagues.
- Defeated Proposal No. 2009-102. Part of a package of proposals created to address problems in men’s basketball recruiting, the legislation would have required institutions to hire only enrolled students or institutional staff members at camps and clinics.
- Adopted Proposal No. 2009-101 as amended. The original proposal, which would have allowed recruiting to take place at institutional camps and clinics in men’s basketball, was narrowed in scope to allow only recruiting conversations to take place at the events. This proposal was also part of the men’s basketball recruiting package.
• Referred Proposal No. 2009-100 to the Men’s Basketball Issues Committee for further study with a directive to come back with more refined legislation at the next opportunity. The proposal would prohibit institutions from hosting, sponsoring or conducting nonscholastic men’s basketball contests, practices or events at campus facilities or off-campus facilities regularly used by the institution. The legislation, introduced by the Board of Directors on October 29, 2009, includes the caveat that contracts entered into after that date will be considered in violation if the rule is adopted. While the proposal has not been adopted yet, it is still considered active in the cycle. The Men’s Basketball Issues Committee is expected to review the proposal at its next opportunity, and will consider the appropriate scope of the legislation.

• Adopted portions of Proposal No. 2009-98, including a requirement that the men’s basketball schedule be approved by the faculty athletics representative or a faculty committee before the season and requiring men’s basketball teams to return to campus within 24 hours after a competition. However, the Council defeated the portion of the proposal that would have restructured the preseason practice schedule and eliminated a game. The group also defeated a women’s basketball proposal that would have eliminated a game from the season (No. 2009-78).

• Tabled all proposals that would form the structure of sand volleyball as an emerging sport. Tabling the proposals will allow for more time to build consensus around the playing and practice season, coaching structure and financial aid opportunities.

• Adopted proposals limiting transportation in the nonchampionship segment in several sports to ground transportation, unless there is no Division I institution within 400 miles.

• Defeated Proposal No. 2009-41, which would have eliminated printed media guides.

• Adopted Proposal No. 2009-42 after reconsideration. The proposal prohibits institutions from distributing printed media guides to recruits.

• Adopted Proposal No. 2009-32-B. Opposed by the student-athletes, this proposal deregulates phone calls during contact periods in sports with defined recruiting calendars (other than football).

• Adopted Proposal No. 2009-10. Designed to address concerns related to the employment of more experienced coaches in the graduate assistant category, the proposal requires graduate assistant coaches to have earned their first baccalaureate degree or exhausted athletics eligibility within the last seven years.

The Legislative Council’s actions are not considered final until they pass review by the Division I Board of Directors. The Board meets April 29.

In other business, the Council upheld the Legislative Review and Interpretations Committee’s interpretation that the effective date of Proposal No. 2009-31 – which requires institutions that publicly designate a head-coach-in-waiting to hold those coaches to the same recruiting restrictions as head coaches – does apply to institutions that had publicly designated head-coaches-in-waiting before the introduction of the proposal. Texas and Maryland, which have both publicly designated head-coaches-in-waiting, appealed the LRIC decision to the Council.

Legislative Council modifies organized-competition rule
The Division I Legislative Council, acting at its spring meeting in response to an override request by the Division I membership, delayed the effective date of the delayed-enrollment/organized-competition portion of a proposal dealing with the amateurism of incoming student-athletes. Proposal No. 2009-22 as modified now will be subject to a second override period.

The proposal, which loosens regulations prohibiting prospective student-athletes from participating on teams with teammates receiving more than actual and necessary expenses, also has eligibility ramifications for prospects who do not enroll in college within a year of high school graduation (six months for tennis) or at the earliest opportunity after high school graduation (whichever is earliest).

Prospects who delay enrollment and compete in organized competition will be charged a season of competition for each year of participation and be required to sit out a year upon enrollment at the NCAA institution. Only the effective date for the delayed-enrollment/organized-competition portion was changed.

The delayed-enrollment/organized-competition portion will not take effect until August 1, 2011 (August 1, 2012 for tennis student-athletes). The Amateurism Cabinet recommended the change, and the Legislative Council agreed that allowing extra time will help with education efforts.

Prospective student-athletes in sports other than tennis, swimming and diving, and, beginning August 1, women’s volleyball, will continue to be subject to the “21st birthday rule” (which charges a season of competition for every year a prospect participates in organized competition after the 21st birthday and before full-time enrollment), until August 1, 2011 (2012 for tennis).

Men’s ice hockey and skiing were removed from the proposal before adoption.

The delayed effective date will provide greater notice for institutions to adjust to the new rule and provide ample time to address additional issues related to the application of the proposal. The Amateurism Cabinet intends to introduce legislation in the 2010-11 cycle that will address prospects who delay enrollment to train for the Olympics or other international competition and participate in competition as part of that training.

The Council and the Amateurism Cabinet (which originally proposed the legislation) believe the two portions should be tied together to address competitive-equity concerns, to emphasize the importance of academics and to level the playing field by ensuring relatively similar competitive opportunities before college enrollment.

The Board of Directors will have the opportunity to review the Legislative Council action at its April 29 meeting. The legislation will also be subject to a 60-day override period, during which the Division I membership has the opportunity to request an override of the proposal as modified. At least 30 requests to override must be received for the legislation to be revisited. At least 100 override requests are required to suspend legislation.

Camps proposal modified, basketball remains
By Michelle Brutlag Hosick

The Division I Legislative Council has removed all sports except men’s and women’s basketball from a proposal requiring institutional camps and clinics to be held on campus or within 100 miles of campus. The action, taken at the Council's spring meeting in Indianapolis on Monday and Tuesday, came after the Division I membership requested an override of the proposal, which applied to all sports but football. The proposal as modified is subject to a second 60-day override period.

The original proposal, No. 2009-51, was intended to address concerns that camps occurring far from an institution’s campus are being conducted for recruiting purposes and could disadvantage schools that can’t afford to hold camps far from home. The change would also cut costs for institutions and reduce the burden on institutional personnel expected to work at camps and clinics.

The proposal was introduced into the cycle because some in the membership wanted to increase the scope of Proposal No. 2009-51-A, which limited the restriction to basketball. That proposal, introduced by the Championships/Sport Management Cabinet by way of the Men’s Basketball Issues Committee, was supported by the National Association of Basketball Coaches and the Women’s Basketball Coaches Association.

Much of the objection to the proposal came from interests other than basketball.

Institutions requesting the override cite longstanding camps and clinics that are held more than 100 miles from campus and point out that the legislation would advantage institutions in metropolitan areas. Others argue that such camps help high school student-athletes and teams get more exposure at an affordable cost and provide a method of promoting the sport for coaches in sports with regional popularity (for example, ice hockey, lacrosse, field hockey).

The Division I Board of Directors has the opportunity to review the modified proposal at its April 29 meeting. If the Board takes no further action, the legislation is subject to an additional 60-day override period. At least 30 requests to override must be received for the legislation to be revisited. At least 100 override requests are required to suspend legislation.

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