



## **NCHC 2020-21 Season Start and Model FAQs**

### **Why did the NCHC choose Dec. 1 as a start date for competition?**

- The NCHC has always been focused on ensuring games begin in a safe and responsible manner for all involved with athletic competitions on our campuses, particularly our student-athletes, and the extra time allowed for responsible plans to be put in place.
- This date aligns with the plans to start competitive schedules from other hockey conferences and NCAA winter sports, in particular basketball.
- The medical guidance provided to the NCHC believes that this timeframe combined with the schedule model, is the best chance to start the season successfully.
- Many institutions across the country, including most NCHC member schools, will have completed the fall semester of classes or have moved any remaining classes almost entirely to remote learning within the week of Thanksgiving. The density of campus populations will be less around the potential start date of competition.
- With most academic coursework or final examinations being performed remotely by this time, greater flexibility is provided to conduct athletic competitions.
- The Conference is committed to maximizing the number of games, while creating a schedule that also provides for flexibility. The start date, along with the schedule model, provides student-athletes a meaningful amount of competitions, even with the start date being delayed by almost two months.

### **Why did the NCHC choose a 'Pod' model to start the season?**

- With all eight teams in one location, our membership believes it allows for the best environment to play games, while mitigating the risks of COVID-19.
- With health and safety of student-athletes being the top priority and the Conference spanning a large geographic area, there are challenges in creating a schedule that is regionalized and alleviates longer team travel, particularly air travel. The membership has been focused on coming up with a solution that can still allow for competition against all NCHC schools to occur while also mitigating longer travel. We believe the Pod concept provides an opportunity to help mitigate risks in the virus spread related to long-distance travel.
- By starting in a centralized location, it provides additional time for all NCHC institutions to prepare overall return to play protocols to be implemented on campus prior to conducting competitions in a traditional structure.
- All student-athletes, coaches, staff and officials will be subject to a robust and consistent testing strategy within the Pod, while alleviating the need for schools to conduct testing during this same timeframe.

### **Why did the NCHC choose Omaha as the host for the Pod?**

- Omaha is home to the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC), one of the nation's leading medical schools, and the affiliated Global Center for Health Security (GCHS), a world-renowned center for infectious disease and infections research, including the only national

quarantine unit for high-consequence infections. Both UNMC and GCHS have been at the forefront of COVID-19 research and work for the nation and world.

- Under the University of Nebraska Regents and as an extension of UNMC is Regional Pathology Services (RPS), which will oversee and manage the on-site testing process of all individuals in the Pod. RPS provides laboratory services through the state of Nebraska and expanded region.
- The NCHC has been working closely with medical professionals at UNMC and GCHS to establish testing and general return to play protocols for the entire season. Medical professionals at both UNMC and GCHS are helping the NCHC develop the testing strategy that will be used in the Pod.
- Omaha is the most centrally located city in the Conference and allows for convenient travel to and from the Pod for all NCHC teams.
- The accessibility between team hotels and Baxter Arena is convenient, alleviates the need for additional travel within the market, and provides an opportunity to create a safe environment to mitigate COVID-19 risks.

### **How long will the Pod be?**

The Pod will take place the first three weeks of December. This timeframe is when many schools are finished for the semester or fall semester classes have primarily moved to remote learning, allowing for student-athletes to complete academic requirements away from their campuses. The student-athletes will leave the Pod for a short break over the holidays, before returning to their respective campuses to resume games and begin classes in January.

### **How many games will each team play in the Pod?**

Each team will play 10 games in the Pod. Each team will play 3-4 games per week. All teams will be scheduled to play back-to-back games only twice in the Pod, but games will occur throughout the week. Team schedules during their scheduled final examination period/week will be limited.

### **How many games will each team play in conference play?**

Each team will play 26 games in the 2020-21 season (two more than normally scheduled for conference contests). Ten (10) of those games will take place in the Pod (Dec. 1-20), while the remaining 16 games will take place January through March with regionalized travel. Each team will have eight home and eight away games during the second portion of the season.

### **What testing protocol will NCHC teams be required to follow?**

Within the Pod, the testing will be conducted centrally through a strategy being developed by the Conference and medical professionals from the University of Nebraska Medical Center and Global Center for Health Security. The testing protocol within the second portion of the season will have teams following the most current NCAA recommendations for 'high transmission sports,' at a minimum. The details about the Conference's testing protocols will be released at a later date.

### **Will NCHC teams play any non-conference games?**

No final decisions have been made about non-conference games during any portion of the season. If non-conference games are allowed, it can be expected that they would be played against a regional opponent who meets minimum protocols for testing.

### **When will NCHC teams be allowed to practice?**

Teams have been within their in-season schedules and other countable athletically related activities (CARA) since Oct. 3 (the original scheduled start date for the season), as long as they are in conjunction with local, state, and institutional restrictions and guidelines.

**Will fans be allowed in the Pod or at games on campus sites this season?**

At this time, no decisions regarding fans for any part of the season have been made. The collective membership and Douglas County (NE) Health Department will have the authority over whether fans will be allowed in the Pod. Institutions and the local county health authorities will determine whether fans will be allowed in member school venues during the second portion of the season. If allowed, each institution will work with those authorities to determine an appropriate capacity for games.