

NATIONAL INTERCOLLEGIATE RUGBY ASSOCIATION CONSTITUTION & BYLAWS

PREAMBLE

We, the members of the National Intercollegiate Rugby Association (hereinafter the “Association” or “NIRA” as the context may dictate) to fully realize our purpose, do hereby adopt and establish this constitution and bylaws as the guiding instrument of our organization.

1. NAME.

The name of the Association is the National Intercollegiate Rugby Association.

2. MISSION.

A. Statement of Purpose

The mission of the Association shall be to encourage the introduction, teaching, promotion, and understanding of the sport of women’s rugby and undertake other activities incidental or conducive to the furtherance of these objects.

The overarching goal of the Association is to help support the growth of women’s rugby nationally to attain NCAA Championship status.

NIRA brings together institutions of higher education that compete at the highest levels of intercollegiate women’s rugby in the United States. The Association seeks to organize, manage, and promote the sport of intercollegiate women’s rugby, and to annually hold a postseason intercollegiate national women’s rugby championship called the National Intercollegiate Rugby Association (NIRA) National Championship.

B. Bylaws, Rules and Regulations

To enact bylaws, rules, and regulations designed to achieve those purposes.

C. Enforcement

To provide procedures for the enforcement of those bylaws, regulations, and rules.

D. Services

To render services to members of the Association.

3. ADMINISTRATION.

A. Directors of Athletics

The directors of athletics and athletics administrators of the member institutions are responsible for adhering to NCAA divisional rules, as well as those rules and policies established specifically for the Association.

B. Executive Committee

The business and day-to-day operations of the Association shall be directed by a body to be known as the Executive Committee.

The purpose of the Executive Committee will be to provide guidance to the membership as a whole with a representation from all constituents. Any revision to or permanent adoption of policy must go through a vote of the entire membership.

The Executive Committee will meet as required to address concerns, provide interpretations of Association policy, and enact temporary policy for Association matters. All aforementioned matters must be passed by a majority of those members voting, provided those present constitute more than half of the Committee membership. Members of the committee whose teams may be involved in an incident are not permitted to participate in discussions or cast a vote concerning the issue.

The Executive Committee shall consist of five voting members composed of athletic administrators from different member institutions, plus four *ex-officio*, non-voting members composed of the NIRA Commissioner and the chairs of the NIRA Coaches group. If the Treasurer is not otherwise a member of the Executive Committee, the Treasurer shall also serve as an *ex-officio*, non-voting member.

The composition of the athletics administrators' portion of the Executive Committee shall be established according to the following:

NIRA Athletic Administrator and Affiliation	Original Term Length
1. Division I Ivy	2 years
2. Division I non-Ivy	3 years
3. At Large	2 years
4. Division II	3 years
5. Division III	3 years

All athletics administrators' seats are eligible for re-election to a second term by the membership. No individual may serve more than six consecutive years on the Executive Committee. Individuals must wait a minimum of one year to be eligible for a seat at the conclusion of six consecutive years served.

C. Executive Committee President & Treasurer.

A member of the Executive Committee shall serve as President. The President shall be elected annually by members of the Executive Committee.

The Treasurer shall be appointed annually by the Executive Committee and will maintain the financial records of the Association and give these records to their successor in good order. The Commissioner will provide updates regarding the Association budget to the Treasurer quarterly

and be responsible for ensuring the Treasurer has an accurate accounting of all revenue and expenses. The Treasurer shall be an ex-officio, non-voting member of the Executive Committee unless they are a voting member by virtue of holding a separate voting position.

D. Commissioner.

The Executive Committee shall be authorized to appoint a Commissioner. The Commissioner shall report to the Executive Committee of the Association and shall have charge of, and be responsible for, all areas in relation to Association development, communication, and organization. The Commissioner shall have general and active supervision over the business of the Association.

E. Coaches' Chairs.

The Coaches' Chairs will be elected by the coaches within their division in the Association's coaching body and serve in a non-voting capacity on the Executive Committee. There will be one chair from each declared division (Division I, Division II, and Division III).. The chairs will provide an unbiased perspective from the coaches group as a whole and convey any concerns or major talking points from their peers. The chairs will each serve a two-year term. The chairs are eligible for re-election. No individual may serve more than four consecutive years as a coach chair. Individuals must wait a minimum of one year to be eligible to serve again in this capacity at the conclusion of four consecutive years.

F. Vacancies.

In the event of a vacancy, the appropriate body shall act expeditiously to replace the position being vacated. Individuals assuming vacant positions shall serve the remaining term of the previous occupant of the role unless otherwise designated by the appropriate body prior to serving.

G. Annual Meeting.

The Association will meet annually in-person at the NCAA Convention.

The directors of athletics or their representative shall cast votes on all Association legislative proposals with a simple majority of the members (one per school) necessary to sustain a vote. In the event of a tie, the Commissioner shall cast the deciding vote.

Proxy votes shall be allowed via phone or e-mail if permission is granted in writing by the member representative before a scheduled meeting.

Decisions on policies of organization and governance will be voted on at the annual meetings or at suitably scheduled special meetings.

4. MEMBERSHIP.

A. Eligible Members.

The Association will be composed of varsity teams that operate under their respective NCAA Divisional Manuals, the NCAA Bylaws, and applicable World Rugby laws, as well as rules and policies established specifically by the Association.

A four-year college or university that sponsors women's rugby is eligible to become a member of the Association. Individual programs must meet the following conditions to be recognized as an eligible team:

- (1) The team officially shall have been accorded NCAA varsity status by the institution's president, chancellor, or committee responsible for intercollegiate athletics.
- (2) The team is administered by the department of intercollegiate athletics.
- (3) The team abides by NCAA regulations for the division in which the institution belongs, including limits on playing and practice seasons, recruiting regulations, and student-athlete eligibility.
- (4) The eligibility of student-athletes participating on the team shall be reviewed and certified by a staff member designated by the institution's president, chancellor, or committee responsible for intercollegiate athletics policy.

B. Prospective Members.

Prospective new members must send a letter of application with the desired year of membership to the Commissioner.

The Commissioner shall determine whether the applying institution satisfies the membership requirements of the Association. If said requirements are satisfied, the application shall be referred to the Executive Committee for consideration. A favorable two-thirds vote of the Executive Committee shall be required to elect an applicant into the Association.

All members joining the Association shall be deemed to accept the terms of this Constitution and any Bylaws, and are required to conduct themselves in accordance with the Association's ethical framework.

C. Dues and Fees.

Members shall pay membership dues and fees as determined in the annual budget. Annual Association dues will be reviewed and set at the annual in-person January meeting for the upcoming academic year. The Association's annual dues shall be proposed by the Executive Committee and voted on by the membership. Fees for services shall be those proposed by the Commissioner and ratified by the Executive Committee on an as-needed basis.

All members of the Association shall be jointly and individually responsible for the financial liabilities of the Association.

D. Loss of Membership.

A team may resign from the Association with or without cause simply by not renewing the annual membership dues as required. Midseason resignations will not be accepted. The resigning team shall remain liable for any pending financial obligations to the Association.

E. Voting.

Members shall vote and participate in the activities of the Association through their respective duly appointed and accredited representatives. Each member shall have one vote cast by only one of its accredited representatives.

A quorum shall only be established when the Commissioner and more than 50% of all eligible voters are in attendance. Robert's Rules of Order shall be followed unless stated otherwise in this document.

F. Membership Responsibility.

By acceptance of election into membership of the Association, each member represents that it has read and is adhering to the Constitution & Bylaws and all rules and regulations of the Association and NCAA.

The Constitution & Bylaws, and other policies and legislation of this Association, unless otherwise specified therein, shall apply to the sport of women's rugby designated by the member institution in its annual NIRA Certification of Eligibility as part of its varsity intercollegiate athletics program.

If a student-athlete is ineligible under the terms of the Constitution & Bylaws or other legislation of the Association, the institution shall be obligated immediately to apply the applicable rule to the student-athlete and withhold her from all intercollegiate athletics competition until eligibility is restored.

G. Annual Certification of Eligibility.

Each member of the Association is required to complete the annual Certification of Eligibility form to confirm its program is eligible to compete for the National Championship and thus abiding by Association and NCAA policies.

The form must be signed by the institution's Director of Athletics or the designated athletic administrator with oversight of the women's rugby program.

5. DISSOLUTION.

On dissolution of the Association, the membership shall, after paying or making provision for the payment of all of the liabilities of the Association, dispose of all the assets of the Association by distributing those assets exclusively for charitable purposes. Such organization(s) shall operate exclusively for charitable purposes, as the Board of Stewards shall determine, as exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and as other than a private foundation under Section 509 of the Internal Revenue Code.

6. AMENDMENT.

These Bylaws may be altered or new Bylaws may be adopted, by a two-thirds majority vote of a quorum of full members. Proposed changes shall be submitted in writing to the President not less than seven (7) days before the meeting for inclusion in the agenda. The Commissioner shall send copies of the proposed changes to the members.

GENERAL OPERATIONAL POLICIES

1. CONDUCT & ETHICS.

A. Code of Conduct.

All players and coaches must abide by the following Code of Conduct:

NIRA players and coaches represent their colleges and are ambassadors of the Association and varsity collegiate rugby in the United States. As such, NIRA players and coaches are expected to behave with dignity both on and off the field. Players and coaches should not tolerate behavior of any sort which would reflect negatively on the image of the NCAA, NIRA, or the participating institutions.

Players, coaches and spectators are not to use foul language or make threatening remarks before, during, or after the match. Such behaviors, whether directed at teammates, opponents, match officials, or spectators, are unacceptable. Engaging in such behaviors will be considered a violation of the Code of Conduct and disciplinary action will be taken by the appropriate Organization.

B. Institutional Discipline.

All member institutions are responsible for the conduct and behavior of their employees and students. If a member institution wishes to request special disciplinary action against an employee or student of a fellow member institution, it is Association policy that these procedures be used in order as stated:

- Communication from athletics director to athletics director requesting action.
- Communication from athletics director to the Association office requesting Association action.
- If the Commissioner finds that additional discipline is in order, he/she may request action by the appropriate athletics director.
- Coaches are encouraged to use the Commissioner or Coaches' Chair as an initial conduit by which to express coach-to-coach concerns.

For the purpose of NIRA policies and operations, these procedures shall supersede the processes of World Rugby Regulation 20.

Matters involving Association policy are to be brought to the attention of the Executive Committee through the Commissioner.

Member schools have the right to appeal any committee decision considered to be in conflict with the written policies. Such an appeal must be communicated to the Commissioner. The Commissioner will conduct a meeting with the Executive Committee who shall provide a

resolution of the issue. It is further understood that once a decision is reached in such an appeal, it is improper for a member institution to engage in any further lobbying for its cause.

C. Association Discipline.

The Commissioner is permitted to assess penalties (i.e., suspensions) on coaches and student-athletes for abusive or racial language, physical action with the intent to injure, negative language toward officiating in public forums (i.e., media) or other incidents, which the Commissioner deem as detrimental to the image of the Association. The institution's director of athletics will be notified of any penalty and will be responsible for carrying out any action requested by the Commissioner.

Disciplinary issues that arise on the field during competition may be referred to the Association's Disciplinary Committee, which shall be appointed by the Commissioner. The Disciplinary Committee shall use World Rugby Regulation 17 as a guideline for the handling of on-field issues.

The Association's Executive Committee will hear appeals to disciplinary decisions. Players and coaches will still be eligible to compete or coach during the appeal process.

2. GAME DAY INFORMATION.

A. Rugby Playing Rules.

Unless otherwise stated within this document all matches will follow [World Rugby – Laws of the Game](#).

For the purpose of NIRA competitions, roster/squad sizes for an individual XV's match are capped at 25 players with 10 substitutions allowed. Rolling replacements are not permitted.

B. Playing Field.

Institutions are encouraged to follow the standard playing field and equipment requirements as outlined in [Law No. 1](#) of the World Rugby Laws of the Game.

If an institution's playing field does not meet the requirements as outlined it will be communicated to the Commissioner. After such communication it will be determined if the field is adequate for regular season and/or postseason play.

C. Kit Requirements.

All teams are to be properly and identically outfitted in a rugby kit in accordance with World Rugby - Laws of the Game. Additionally, all kits are expected to have numbered jerseys, rugby shorts and socks that are clean without noticeable holes. The Association shall permit players to wear numbers beyond 1-23 provided no two players wear the same number in an individual match.

D. Match Officials.

The Association is responsible for the scheduling and appointment of match officials for all NIRA-scheduled matches. If a NIRA member schedules a match versus a non-NIRA member during one of its designated 'bye' weekends, the member may request through the Association assistance in acquiring a NIRA match official. If a NIRA member schedules an away match against a non-NIRA member, the Association may not have the responsibility or jurisdiction to assign a match official, at the Commissioner's discretion.

Coaches are expected to send their schedules to the Association before the start of the season and work with the Association to ensure game day officials will be present.

Institutions are heavily encouraged to develop local pools of Touch Judges and Assistant Referees for their home matches. The Association shall make best efforts to assign Touch Judges and Assistant Referees to all matches where local pools of such officials are not available.

It is the responsibility of members to contact all designated match officials at least four days prior to the match to confirm match details (such as; start time, directions to venue, emergency contact info, referee changing area, etc.).

All officials (referees and assistant referees) are expected to be certified by USA Rugby.

Officials must be notified of any game cancellation (other than weather-related cancellations) at least 72-hours prior to game time.

E. Short-Sided Matches.

If a program is concerned about their roster size and there is a potential to not field a full team of 15 players with appropriate substitutes, the institution must contact the Commissioner prior to the start of competition. Teams that regularly anticipate shortages will be listed as provisional/developmental teams in the master schedule and scheduled against opposition accordingly.

In the event a program not otherwise concerned about their roster size finds there is potential to not field a full team of 15 players with appropriate substitutes, the head coach must notify the Commissioner and contact the opposing head coach a minimum of five days before the scheduled contest and provide notice. The home team must also contact the match officials and alert them of the situation. A decision on the game should be made 48 hours prior to kickoff to allow for a team to find another potential playing opportunity.

Teams may not begin a contest with less than 13 players on the field. If a team should fall below 13 players on the field the outcome of the match automatically registers as a 28-0 forfeit and formally ends. The teams may continue in an alternate agreed-upon format to gain additional touches but the score shall be recorded as a 28-0 forfeit for the purpose of the competition standings.

Teams may mutually agree to play a format of less than 15s (i.e. 7s or 10s; matches must be held in World Rugby-approved formats) with the permission of the Commissioner. Teams that regularly expect to compete with only 10s or 7s must communicate this to the Association prior to the construction of the master schedule.

A team is permitted to refuse to play a scheduled 15s match that does not follow a 15s format. If a team with a full roster is not in agreement to play a different format they will receive a forfeit victory (28-0) in the NIRA competition standings.

Only teams with the ability to field a 15s match (minimum 13 players) will be eligible for the postseason.

F. Scheduling.

The Association shall create the master schedule for each competitive season with the input of the members.

Teams may arrange other matches, provided those matches follow NIRA policies and regulations, provided they are submitted to the Association for approval and assignment. Teams are encouraged to maximize participation opportunities against other NIRA programs.

The Association reserves the right to cancel any team-arranged games in the event the Association needs to make up, rearrange, or otherwise schedule a NIRA-scheduled event.

G. Divisional Designation.

Each program shall compete in their designated NCAA division. Cross-divisional matches shall be permitted but only intra-divisional matches (not inter-divisional matches) shall count in the competition standings.

Provisional teams shall be placed in their designated NCAA division and teams in their division will be heavily encouraged to play against them.

H. Score Reporting.

Association sports information departments are required to designate a contact that shall report all game scores the night of the game via their institutional website and the Association's website.

A complete report shall include the final score of the game, the format of the game (i.e. 15s, 7s or 10s) and statistics for both teams in the following categories: tries, conversions, penalty tries, penalty goals, and drop goals. The collection and reporting of advanced statistics, such as tackles, is also encouraged.

Sports Information contacts are expected to keep an accurate and updated game schedule on their institutional website and alert the Commissioner immediately of any forfeits or dates changes.

Members are also encouraged to maintain roster pages, complete with jersey numbers, for the program.

3. POSTSEASON.

A. National Championship.

The Fall 15s NIRA postseason will be recognized as the National Championship until women's rugby receives NCAA Championship sponsorship.

B. Format.

Four teams from each division shall qualify for the postseason, which is to be played in a semi-final/final format over two weekends. The semi-finalists shall be set by combination of the regular season standings and any play-in matches as deemed necessary by the Commissioner. Teams in each division shall be seeded by their record and any applicable tiebreaker, or by their designated play-in seed. The two highest-seeded teams from the regular season standings shall host their respective semi-final matches.

After the conclusion of the semi-finals, the two remaining teams in each division shall advance to the NIRA Championship Finals weekend event, which will take place at a predetermined site as selected through the membership. The dates of the tournament and the finals weekend event will be confirmed upon conclusion of the master fall scheduling process."

The champion of the NIRA Division I Final shall be the National Champion.

C. Postseason Criteria.

Only teams with the ability to field a 15s match (minimum 13 players) will be eligible for the postseason.

The following criteria will be used when seeding the postseason tournament and selecting the participants for each divisional tournament.

- Standings Points (PTS) - in all divisional matches
- Number of Wins (W) - in all divisional matches
- Head-to-Head Standings Points (PTS) - between tied teams
- Head-to-Head Number of Wins (W) - between tied teams
- Head-to-Head Points Differential (PD) - between tied teams
- Head-to-Head Tries Differential (TD) - between tied teams
- Head-to-Head Points For (PF) - between tied teams
- Head-to-Head Tries For (TF) - between tied teams
- Overall Points Differential (PD) - in all divisional matches
- Overall Tries Differential (TD) - in all divisional matches
- Overall Points For (PF) - in all divisional matches
- Overall Tries For (TF) - in all divisional matches
- Coin Flip

These criteria shall only be applied for properly-played intra-divisional matches that are designated as divisional matches for the purpose of standings prior to the start of the season. In

the event of forfeits occurring, forfeiting teams shall be removed from the calculation of the standings for the purpose of breaking ties and seeding the postseason tournament(s).

Teams participating in play-in matches due to playing an unbalanced regular season schedule shall have their seed set by the Commissioner in advance of the season starting.

Standings Points shall be assigned as follows:

- Win = 4 PTS
- Draw/Tie = 2 PTS
- Loss = 0 PTS
- Losing by 7 match points or less = 1 PTS (Bonus Point)
- Scoring 4 tries or more, regardless of match outcome = 1 PTS (Bonus Point)
- Forfeit Win = 5 PTS
- Forfeit Loss = -1 PTS