



**Q&A re:
Changes to Messiah College NCAA Post-season Weekend Play
Policy**

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What is the change in Messiah College's policy regarding participation of its athletics teams in NCAA Sunday competition?

- Messiah College has made a decision that, effective Oct. 31, 2007, all of its intercollegiate athletic teams will be permitted to participate in post-season NCAA competition that occurs on Sundays.
 - It is important to note that this change is for *NCAA post-season play only*. Messiah College is committed to preserving the Sunday “no play” policy for regular season play and conference playoffs.
- Previously, only a few Messiah teams—baseball, softball, and men’s lacrosse—were permitted to participate in Sunday post-season NCAA competition (due to a variety of extenuating scheduling circumstances involving their specific sports during the final weekend of championship play). Exceptions were also granted to other Messiah teams if:
 - 1) the post-season Sunday competition occurred due to weather-related postponements, or
 - 2) a weekend tournament involved more than four teams participating at a single site and Messiah’s not participating in Sunday play would force the competition to continue into Monday.
 - Rationale for the above decision has been based on stewardship and use of resources. If a team was competing in a large tournament, it would be possible that, with a policy of not playing on Sundays, numerous teams who were still competing for the championship would not be able to play until Monday. As a result there would be an additional day of costs charged to the NCAA, to parents, and to other fans while the teams waited until Monday.

What prompted this change?

- The NCAA has previously been accommodating of allowing colleges to have Sunday “no-play” policies and making exceptions for certain teams on a sport-by-sport basis. However, during the first week in October 2007, the NCAA sent Messiah a letter expressing their intent to make this policy consistent across *all* intercollegiate sports within individual schools. Under this new NCAA direction, colleges can still opt not to participate in Sunday post-season competition, but this must be consistently enacted for every sport within the school. In other words, colleges are being asked to determine an “all or none” policy for NCAA post-season Sunday play.

If Messiah was given a choice to go “all or none” with NCAA post-season Sunday play, why did the College decide to allow Sunday participation?

Decision Factors

- **Established Precedent:** Messiah already has an established precedent allowing several of its athletic teams to participate in Sunday post-season NCAA competition due to extenuating circumstances related to specific sports (i.e. scheduling challenges related to large teams, certain facilities only being available on Sundays, etc.) As noted earlier, rationale for that decision has been based on stewardship and use of resources.
- **Lack of Institutional Consistency:** The NCAA’s criteria for recognizing a college’s Sunday “no play” policy include that it must be: 1) consistently enforced for all sports across the institution and that 2) athletics is specifically cited in a broader institutional policy that prohibits collegiate activities on Sundays due to religious reasons. Messiah College’s Sunday “no play” policy does not meet the consistency of either of those criteria.

For example:

- Since the mid 1990s, the College has had the policy that allowed certain sports to participate on Sundays during NCAA playoffs. Thus we already officially allow some sports to participate. In addition, the College has permitted certain sports, particularly golf and tennis, to compete on Sundays in conference championships (due to difficulty in scheduling facilities for these sports).
- It is also the case that Messiah does not have an absolute prohibition of activities on Sunday. For example, support functions on campus (e.g., dining, security, etc.) operate on Sunday. The library is open on Sunday afternoons to allow students to study and complete their school work. Special musical and theatrical programs are also scheduled on Sundays.

Decision Summary:

- It is important to see Messiah’s decision related to Sunday games during the NCAA playoffs in an institutional context that takes Sundays seriously without adopting an absolute prohibition against College-sanctioned programming and activities on Sunday.
- Given our current practices in non-athletic programming and given our current policy in athletic programming, extending the possibility of Sunday play to all sports is internally consistent with current practice and with Messiah self-identity as a Christian institution. Thus the College’s administration does not view this decision in any way as a fundamental shift in our Christian identity or practice. While we may prefer to stay with our current athletics policy and practice, the administration believes that the revised policy is the best approach given the choice presented to us by the NCAA.

Who made the decision?

The decision about how Messiah would respond to the change in NCAA Sunday no-play policy was made by the President's Cabinet in conjunction with input from Athletics Director Jerry Chaplin and the coaches.

When is the change effective?

The NCAA is requiring that these changes take effect immediately, beginning with the Fall 2007 post season.

Does this open the door for Sunday play in Messiah's regular season athletic competition?

It is important to note that the administration does not view this change in NCAA post-season Sunday play as opening the door to Sunday play during the regular athletic season. Messiah will continue to uphold its policy of not competing in Sunday intercollegiate athletic events during regular season play.

Will Messiah host NCAA post-season competition on Sundays?

It is desirable across all sports to have home-field advantage. If Messiah is invited to host an NCAA tournament event with a Saturday-Sunday format, the College would accept that offer to host.

How do Messiah's coaches feel about the change in policy?

Messiah's administration is well aware that there is a difference of opinion on this decision in the College community in general and within the Department of Athletics. College administrators also realize that the personal conscience and conviction of all employees and coaches will not be totally satisfied by this decision. It is difficult to construct institutional policies that please everyone across a variety of stakeholders. But it is the College's hope that those who disagree will understand and respect this institutional decision even if it unfortunately goes against the personal views and convictions of some.

Are there other Christian colleges or universities who participate in NCAA post-season Sunday play?

There are several members of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) that play on Sunday, including regular-season contests and NCAA post-season competition.

Does Messiah College respect Sunday as the Christian Sabbath?

Respecting Sunday as the Sabbath and as a special "day of rest" has been, and continues to be, an important part of the Christian tradition. It is also the case that sincere and committed Christians (theologians, pastors, and lay persons alike) do not all have the same understanding of what this means or how it is to be lived out. It should not be surprising, then, that there is a lot of diversity

and variation among the educators, administrators, and staff in the Messiah community on this issue. It is also not surprising that this same diversity appears among our peer Christian institutions.

Messiah has no comprehensive policy that prohibits all College activity or programming on Sunday. However, Messiah, as a Christian institution, honors Sunday as a special day and certainly encourages its employees and students to view Sunday as a special day of worship. Therefore, it is not surprising that Messiah, by established practice, does not treat Sunday as just any other day. Whenever possible, Messiah minimizes programming on Sundays and especially strives to avoid programming that interferes with the traditional Sunday morning worship hours. This is done out of a theological respect for Christian worship, a commitment to respect the personal views on Sunday activities of Messiah employees and students, and to offer as much as possible a day of rest for the college community.