

1.1 Overview

College student-athletes play a big part in the make-up of most WPSL rosters. WPSL teams must follow strict guidelines set forth by the NCAA so as not to jeopardize the NCAA eligibility of current or potential players. The trust that a college coaching staff has in your organization's adherence to NCAA regulations will play a major role in these programs sending players to your WPSL team.

College programs and the WPSL have a mutually beneficial relationship. WPSL teams, through their high level of play and professional coaching staff, maintain a collegiate player's fitness and develop their skills throughout the summer. Our summer league prepares the college student-athlete for their fall season. In turn, your team benefits by receiving quality collegiate players to play on your team. Establishing a relationship with the top college programs in your area is paramount to your success on the field.

The following guidelines are specific items taken from the NCAA Rules Manual. All teams must be familiar with these specific rules as well as others published in the NCAA manual. Below you will find the most common rules as they apply to a WPSL team.

The entire Division I, II, & III NCAA Manuals can be downloaded for free at www.ncaapublications.com.

1.2 WPSL – Professional or Amateur?

Although the WPSL is an amateur league affiliated with U.S. Soccer, the actions of WPSL teams may deem it professional in the eyes of the NCAA and thus jeopardize the college student-athlete. A WPSL team that utilizes current NCAA student-athletes may not call themselves **professional or semi-professional**. A violation of this rule will cause that player to be ineligible for college athletics. Below are the criteria in which a team may also be deemed professional:

A professional athlete is one who receives any kind of payment, directly or indirectly, for athletics participation except as permitted by the governing legislation of the Association. Payment is the receipt of funds, awards or benefits not permitted by the governing legislation of the Association for participation in athletics. (12.0.2.2 / 12.0.2.3)

A "professional" team is any organized team that:

(a) Provides any of its players more than actual and necessary expenses for participation on the team, except as otherwise permitted by NCAA legislation.

Actual and necessary expenses are limited to the following, provided the value of these items is commensurate with the fair market value in the locality of the player(s) and is not excessive in nature:

- (1) Meals directly tied to competition and practice held in preparation for such competition;
- (2) Lodging directly tied to competition & practice held in preparation for such competition;
- (3) Apparel, equipment and supplies;
- (4) Coaching and instruction;
- (5) Health/medical insurance;
- (6) Transportation (expenses to and from practice competition, cost of transportation from home to training/practice site at the beginning of the season and from training/practice site to home at the end of season);
- (7) Medical treatment and physical therapy;
- (8) Facility usage;
- (9) Entry fees; and
- (10) Other reasonable expenses

(b) Declares itself to be professional or semi-professional. (12.0.2.4)

1.3 Professional Players

Competition against Professionals. An individual may participate singly or as a member of an amateur team against professional athletes or professional teams. (12.2.3.1)

Competition with Professionals. An individual shall not be eligible for intercollegiate athletics in a sport if the individual ever competed on a professional team in that sport. (12.2.3.2)

Professional Player as Team Member. Prior to any player being enrolled in the NCAA, the player is eligible to play on a professional team, provided the player is not being paid to play. They are not allowed to sign any sort of contract as well. Even though this doesn't affect most of the teams, it may affect some of the players. As of right now, high school players can play on a professional team, but NCAA players (with remaining eligibility) are **NOT** allowed to play on professional team with professionals and this applies to *all* divisions. With that said college players are still allowed to play against professional players/teams.

Professional Coach or Referee. Participation on a team that includes a professional coach or referee does not cause the team to be classified as a professional team. (12.2.3.2.2)

1.4 College Athletes Playing in the WPSL

The eligibility of a student-athlete who engages in outside competition is affected as set forth in the following regulations. "Outside competition" is athletics competition against any other athletics team that does not represent the intercollegiate athletics program of the same institution. e.g. your WPSL team. Basically, the difference between a competition and a practice or tryout is anything with a referee (official or not) is considered a competition.

A student-athlete who participates during the academic year as a member of any outside team in any non-collegiate, amateur competition becomes ineligible for intercollegiate competition, unless the following exceptions are met. A student-athlete is permitted to practice on such a team. (14.7.1 / 17.20.8.1.1)

Exceptions:

A student-athlete may compete outside of the institution's declared playing and practice season as a member of an outside team in any non-collegiate, amateur competition during any official vacation period published in the institution's catalog. The number of student-athletes from any one institution that can play or practice shall not exceed 5 players from a Div. I school. (14.7.1.1 / 17.20.8.1.2). There is no limit on D2 or D3 players.

A student-athlete may compete outside of the institution's declared playing and practice season as a member of an outside team in any non-collegiate, amateur competition, provided:

- (a) Such participation occurs no earlier than May 1 for D1 schools (after their Spring season for D2/D3);
- (b) The number of players from any one institution does not exceed five (no limit for D2/D3);
- (c) The competition is approved by the institution's director of athletics;
- (d) No class time is missed for practice or for competition. (14.7.1.2 / 17.20.8.1.1.2)

1.5 Expenses Paid for the College Player

A WPSL team may provide necessary expenses to its players only if the expenses are:

- (a) A reasonable amount for travel and meal expenses, and apparel and equipment
- (b) For practice and game competition;
- (c) Made on a regular basis; and
- (d) Not an incentive and not based on performance.

Practice expenses may be accepted only when such practice is directly related to a competition and is conducted during a continuous time period preceding the competition. (16.10.1.4 / 16.10.1.4.1)

Non-permissible Expenses. The following is not permitted:

Unitemized Expenses. A student-athlete may not accept money for unspecified or unitemized expenses from any organization or individual.

Prohibited Expenses. A student-athlete may not accept money for expenses that are prohibited by the rules governing an amateur non-collegiate event in which the individual participates.

Broken-Time Payments. The receipt by a student-athlete of compensation for a financial loss resulting from absence from employment ("broken-time" payments).

Sponsors. An individual who is not representing an educational institution during participation in athletics competition may not accept any expenses, or any other form of compensation, to participate in the competition from any sponsor other than an individual upon whom the athlete is naturally or legally dependent or the organization (other than a professional sports organization) that is sponsoring the competition. (16.10.2)

1.6 Involvement of College Coaches in the WPSL

No member of the coaching staff of a Div. I institution may be involved in any capacity (e.g., coach, official, player or league/team administrator) at any time (during the academic year, vacation periods and summer) with an outside team that involves any student-athlete with eligibility remaining from the institution's soccer team. (17.20.8.1.2.1)

1.7 Involvement of High School Players in the WPSL

High School players are eligible to play in the WPSL. However, a college team may not participate in a contest against a WPSL team that includes high school players, regardless of whether the player has committed to a particular institution or not. (13.11.1.2)

1.8 Employing College Players

WPSL teams may employ players to work in their organization or they may find jobs for them to work provided that the player is compensated only for work actually performed and at a rate commensurate with the going rate for similar services in that locality.

A student-athlete may be employed as a counselor/instructor in camps, clinics or fee-for-lesson instruction (12.4.1). They may not be paid more than the amount paid to other coaches. Be advised that a team can only use a college player's name, picture or appearance to promote or advertise the camp or clinic in the camp counselor section of the brochure. (12.5.1.7)

1.9 Foreign College Players

Most foreign players compete on NCAA teams without proper international clearance from their home country with the US Soccer Federation. It is mandatory before a player from a foreign country plays in the WPSL, to have the proper clearance through USSF, (International Clearance Form, ITC). The forms are available under documents and forms on the www.WPSL.info or on USSF webpage. See the section in the WPSL operations Manual pertaining to rules regarding International Clearance.

Hopefully this can clarify some issues or questions players may have.

Jerry Zanelli
WPSL Commissioner