

Collegiate Water Polo Association

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To our Parents, Coaches, Athletes, and Fans,

This season has been one of frustration and change for many involved in our sport and the announcement of our championship schedule has only exacerbated that feeling among many. As Commissioner, I recognize the frustration of those unable to participate and the perspective they share without having access to all of the information available. To that end, I thought it would be helpful to explain the process and offer some background information that informed this situation.

To say that COVID caused some disruption in our competitive schedule is an understatement. This season we canceled 35 games, 61 officiating assignments, and 16 hotel reservations. Additionally, every institution faced some level of constraint regarding who they could play, how many different teams they could be exposed to on a given weekend, and whether they were permitted to travel to a particular state or stay in a hotel. Some institutions were not permitted to host and others only on a limited basis. Determining a schedule under these conditions was challenging and we were fortunate to coordinate as much competition as we did.

These constraints placed a specific burden on our championship. When Navy had an outbreak that shut their campus down, no one was more disappointed than the Midshipmen who were seeded first heading into a championship they expected to host. This closure forced the league to seek an alternate site. Unfortunately, the three back-up locations that existed at the beginning of the season when the schedule was finalized a month earlier had now disappeared. Saint James Aquatic Center was booked, Fordham's season was canceled due to COVID the same day Navy announced their closure, and Bucknell's limitations for hosting only allowed two teams on campus per weekend.

Once the news about the Naval Academy was released and knowing these original options were now unavailable, we immediately began searching for another site. In a 24-hour period we reviewed and reached out to 49 different pools in an effort to secure a venue. The criteria was simple. It had to offer all-deep water and be within driving distance for the majority of the league members, since several institutions were not permitted to fly. The search ended last night at 7 PM, when the final site stated they would not rent to an outside group. The reasons were clear. Facilities and schools were already booked with a swim meet or other programming, or they were unwilling to rent to an outside group due to COVID restrictions.

This left Bucknell as the only deep-water site willing to host any competition, with the limitation that no more than two outside institutions could participate. Faced with selecting a field of three teams, the Governance Council reviewed each school's record and strength of schedule and made their decision.

I recognize that some individuals are pleased with the selections and some are frustrated. No matter which three teams were selected, that was going to be the outcome. The fallout from the

COVID outbreak has placed us in a scenario that no one wanted, no one predicted, and many are harmed. The canceled seasons at Navy and Fordham, the number of games lost, and the opportunities never realized are all part of a story we wish never happened. Yet despite these obstacles, the efforts by coaches and most importantly school administrators to create a season when it would have been much easier to just say no was remarkable and something everyone should appreciate. My respect for these individuals and their commitment to their student-athletes has grown tremendously over these last few months.

I know this explanation will serve as little consolation for those not able to participate at the championship, but my hope is that everyone involved can look at the environment we find ourselves in today and despite the circumstances, be thankful for what was able to take place on our campuses. It was not perfect by a long shot and for some it had an unfulfilling ending. But considering this was originally a canceled season, that three months ago was only a hope rather than a reality, it was able to provide an opportunity for athletes to compete, which is why we are here in the first place.

Sincerely,

Daniel Sharadin
Commissioner