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Board revamps recruiting regulations

Phone, text and social media restriction adjustments in the mix

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Men's basketball coaches will be free to contact recruits without many of the current restrictions under a new recruiting model for the sport adopted by the Division I Board of Directors Thursday.

Coaches will be allowed to send unlimited phone calls and text messages to men's basketball recruits. The deregulation extends to social media, starting June 15 after a recruit's sophomore year. Private messages on social networks also will be deregulated. Public messages through social networks will continue to be prohibited because of the rule preventing institutions from publicizing their recruiting efforts.

The Board believed that allowing earlier and more frequent contact between coaches and recruits will help build stronger relationships and reduce some of the influence of third parties on the recruiting process.

The new model, recommended after a year of study by the Leadership Council, also restores two weekends of recruiting at nonscholastic events in April and trims the summer recruiting period to three four-day periods in July.

In October 2010, the commissioners spurred the Council review of the recruiting model by asking the Board to immediately eliminate the July evaluation period. The presidents declined to take immediate action but agreed that changes were necessary. The Board assigned the task to the Leadership Council and gave the group a year to complete its work.

The recommendations approved Thursday signal the end of the bulk of that review.

In addition to modified recruiting periods and less stringent contact rules, the changes adopted by the Board include:

- A start date for official visits beginning January 1 of the junior year, with schools able to pay travel expenses for the prospect and a parent/guardian.
- Permitting some contact at a prospect's educational institution during the junior year in conjunction with an evaluation, with some restrictions and requirements.
- The July period will be limited to three four-day periods beginning Wednesday at 5 p.m. and ending Sunday at 5 p.m.
- The April period will be limited to certified events that begin after 6 p.m. on Friday and end before 4 p.m. on Sunday.
- Permitting staged, on-campus evaluations in conjunction with official visits, though further details will be considered.

Leadership Council Chair Michael Alden, athletics director at Missouri, explained the philosophy behind the model and its effort to help develop better relationships between coaches and the young men they recruit and allow the coaches to emphasize academic performance with recruits as early as possible.

"This model recognizes that men's basketball recruits are vulnerable to mixed messages concerning athletic skills and education at an early age and that college coaches offer the best hope to promote higher education," Alden said. "It also attempts to provide for a natural progression of communication, contact and paid visits for coaches to establish relationships with prospective student-athletes and their families."

Additionally, the presidents charged the Leadership Council to continue to monitor the recruiting environment to ensure the changes are having an impact and determine if further action is required. The Council will also return to the Board in January with a recommendation for summer access and its relationship to summer school.

The new model will be fully in place by Aug. 1, 2012. In April 2012, coaches will be permitted to evaluate on two weekends (not during the Final Four, not during standardized test weekends or over Easter weekend), and the new July calendar will go into effect in 2012 for three four-day periods.

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On June 15, 2012, the current contact limits will be lifted and coaches may contact prospects who have finished their sophomore year. The rest of the provisions will become effective August 1, 2012.

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