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## Panel urges fall model expansion

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**By Jerry Weber**  
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The medical community believes that heat illness in athletics is preventable, and therefore the NCAA took the initiative to approve legislation for all divisions that restructures preseason football activities to minimize health and safety risks for student-athletes.

During its June 2003 meeting, the NCAA Committee on Competitive Safeguards and Medical Aspects of Sports recommended that sport committees adopt a similar acclimatization and recovery model for all fall sports that include a preseason.

The committee noted that the same principles used to reduce the risk of injury for student-athletes participating in football would benefit all student-athletes. The fall preseason is unique in that there is a lack of time limits for practice activities and often a disparity between the physical conditioning status of teammates when arriving on campus.

NCAA Injury Surveillance System data suggest that heat illnesses do occur in other sports that have a fall preseason and the general injuries rates in the preseason are higher for those sports as compared to the regular season. Student-athletes should be allotted the appropriate amount of recovery time between strenuous workouts in order to repair their bodies.

Ninety-four percent of all time loss heat-illness reports occur during the preseason as compared to the regular season. In addition, during the preseason practice period, a student-athlete is at least three times more likely to have a time loss injury of any kind than in the regular season, across all divisions.

There comes a point when logical exercise progression should be taken into consideration. The committee recommends all fall sports use acclimatization and recovery principles to develop their fall preseason practice schedules enhancing student-athlete welfare.

Education plays a big role in the success of initiatives to improve the health and safety of student-athletes. Student-athletes should be encouraged to share all use of ingested medications, nutritional supplements and current medical conditions with medical personnel. Coaches should encourage student-athletes to tell medical personnel if they feel ill during a workout session, which should trigger appropriate monitoring and assessment.

*Jerry Weber is head athletic trainer at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, and chair of the sport science safety subcommittee of the NCAA Committee on Competitive Safeguards and Medical Aspects of Sports.*

### Preseason practice -- key points

Here are key points of the NCAA Committee on Competitive Safeguards and Medical Aspects of Sports' fall sports preseason-practice model.

Before participation in any preseason-practice activities, all student-athletes should have completed a medical examination administered by a physician.

Preseason practice shall begin with an acclimatization period for both first-time participants, as well as continuing student-athletes.

During the acclimatization period, an institution should conduct only one practice.

An institution should not conduct multiple practice sessions on consecutive days.

Practice sessions should have time limits based on individual needs as well as environmental factors.

Student-athletes should be provided with continuous recovery time between practice sessions.

Any extensions in sport preseason time frames place new time demands on sports medicine personnel as well as financial impacts on departments of athletics that should be addressed at the

institutional level appropriately.

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