



Women's Volleyball

SECTION A: Leadership

1. Individuals to fill the identified leadership roles will be elected to two-year terms.

SECTION B: Coaches Meeting

1. A fall meeting will be held in conjunction with the Heart Summit.
2. Monday following post-season championships (9am – MNU) The annual meeting will rotate between MNU and Graceland.
3. Annual NAIA Volleyball Coaches Association business meeting – AVCA national convention (December)

SECTION C: Competition Model

1. The conference has been drawn into four pods, according to the Board of Governor's guidelines. Teams will play a home and home double round robin within their pod and a single home or away match with each member of the opposite pod.

Pod 1	Pod 2	Pod 3	Pod 4
Benedictine	Central Methodist	Graceland	Clarke
Baker	Missouri Valley	Peru State	Mount Mercy
Park	Missouri Baptist	Grand View	Culver-Stockton
MidAmerica Nazarene	William Woods	William Penn	St. Ambrose

2. The dual season must be completed at least ten days prior to the NAIA completion deadline to accommodate conference post season play.

- a. Varsity match times are recommended as follows:
 - i. Weekdays: 7:00 PM
 - ii. Saturdays: 2:00 PM
3. Uniform color guidelines are as follows:
 - a. Uniform selection: Tuesday and Friday matches – Home in dark jerseys and Visitor in light; Saturday matches – Home in light jerseys and visitor in Dark. Any anticipated issues will be communicated in a timely manner. It is desirable for the host team to identify an appropriate location for the visiting team to change from practice wear to game wear.
4. Schedule Approval Process:
 - a. Coaches will have the first review of a drafted schedule, feedback will be gathered by the conference office.
 - b. The drafted schedule and the feedback will be taken to the conference Scheduling Committee for additional review, if necessary.
 - c. The Athletic Directors Committee has final approval.
 - d. Approval comes with a 2/3rds majority voting in the affirmative.
5. Junior Varsity play is encouraged - a Varsity/JV model is acceptable.
6. Where necessary a match may be moved to a different date with the mutual consent of the two Athletics Directors, through the WinWon Schedule Change Request form.
7. Match Play Models:
 - a. Varsity match play: Best 3 of 5 sets (25 points) constitute a match
 - b. Deciding Sets: 15 points
 - c. Only Heart scheduled play will be considered for league standings.
8. Regular Season Champion
 - a. Final standings will be determined for each division based on all conference play (division and cross division).
 - b. The team or teams in first place in the conference standings will be declared the conference regular season champions.
 - c. The “regular season” champion receives the HEART banner and earns the first of the 2 automatic bids to the National Tournament.
9. The Postseason champion receives the second automatic bid.

- a. Should that team already have a bid the second-place team in the postseason tournament will receive the second automatic bid.

SECTION D: Postseason

1. 2026 Conference Tournament Championship – **November 7, 10, 14, 2026**
2. Regular Season Conference Standings:
 - a. Standings (1 through 16) for the conference will be drawn at the conclusion of regular season play based on the number of losses in conference play.
 - b. Example: 14-3 and 13-3 will be considered a tie.
 - c. Example: 3-14 and 2-14 will be considered a tie.
 - d. The tiebreaker procedures will be applied as necessary.
3. Identification of the 8 postseason qualifiers:
 - a. 8 teams will compete in a single elimination championship series. The top two teams in each division will automatically advance to postseason play.
 - b. The next 4 teams will be selected based on final conference standings regardless of divisions. Standings will be based on all conference play.
 - c. The tiebreaker procedures will be applied as necessary.
 - d. The four highest teams in the “entire conference standings” who are not already qualified will become the 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th postseason qualifiers.
4. Each institution's official Heart Conference Volleyball Championship roster shall not exceed **20 student-athletes**, consistent with the NAIA postseason roster limit for volleyball. Roster submission procedures, deadlines, and allowable roster changes shall be administered by the Conference Office.
5. Tie-Breaking Procedures:
 - a. Tie breaking procedures will apply as necessary to determine seed or position in any of the various Heart volleyball competition models. (Including the Regular Dual Season and the JV Tournament).
 - b. The following criteria apply in descending order as necessary to draw some resolution. At the point where any of these procedures breaks a tie between some of the teams the process will automatically revert back to the top of the order and work systematically back through the criteria until all ties are resolved.
 - i. Winner of the head-to-head contest if the teams played only once.

- ii. Percentage of matches won in play among the tied teams.
 - iii. Percentage of sets won in play among the tied teams.
 - iv. Point differential (total offensive points minus total defensive points) in play among the tied teams.
 - v. Percentage of sets won in play with all Heart opponents.
 - vi. Point differential (total offensive points minus total defensive points) in play with all Heart opponents.
 - vii. Coin flip.
 - c. Three Way Ties Cross Division - Tiebreaker
 - i. Break the tie between the teams from the same division using the normal tie-breaker:
 - 1. Head-to-head Match record between the two tied teams.
 - 2. Sets between the two tied team's
 - 3. Points between the two tied teams.
 - 4. Coin toss.
 - ii. Once that tie is broken, then use the Head-to-head tiebreaker between the team who emerged from the three-way tiebreaker with the team they are tied with from the other division.
6. Postseason seeds, draw and hosts.
- a. The eight qualifying teams will be seeded 1-8 by order of the determined conference standings. See Above
 - b. Matchups will be (1-8, 4-5, 3-6, & 2-7) regardless of division.
 - i. Each match – highest seed host.
 - c. Conference and NAIA postseason play is excluded from the season limitation.
 - d. Dates will be on a Saturday/Tuesday/Saturday model such that the final Saturday will match the national deadline for completion of conference tournaments.
 - e. Play throughout the series will be best of 5 match play at home sites.
 - f. Match times on weekdays will typically follow the 7:00 PM regular season model.
 - i. It is recommended that Saturday matches begin at 2:00 PM with the court available for warm-up by 1:00 PM. In either case, there remains the option for a given contest time to be modified through mutual consent.
 - g. The official party for each team participating as stated in the NAIA Volleyball Coaches Manual is 18 players and up to 5 coaching staff. Athletic Trainer, Sports Information Director and Athletic Director will be credentialed separately.

- h. Should it ever occur that the post-season tournament is unavoidably interrupted and cannot be completed in time to meet NAIA calendar requirements the highest seed among the remaining teams from the last fully completed round will be given the HEART automatic bid to national play.
- 7. Junior Varsity Tournaments: A series of one day no charge tournaments will be organized over the course of the season. JV dual play will be encouraged (see dual match guidelines) at the option of individual institutions. A Heart tournament will be held to culminate the JV season.
 - a. Pools will be drawn where possible according to results from regular season HEART JV play.
 - b. Each participating team will be guaranteed at least 3 matches.
 - c. Date: October 25 and 29
 - d. Site: Rotation through the league alphabetically. The host must be able to provide 3 competition courts.
 - e. Team awards will be provided for first and second place. They will be considered an expense of the tournament.
 - f. A 12-player all-tournament team will be selected (each coach will identify which of their players are legitimate Junior Varsity and who will in turn be considered for recognition).
 - g. The host is free to establish a per team entry fee to cover expenses.

SECTION E: Season Limitations

- 1. The start date for competitions is the 3rd Thursday in August.
- 2. Member institutions are limited by NAIA rules to 26 total playing dates, excluding Heart of America postseason and NAIA postseason play. In addition, it is allowable to play 2 scrimmage dates. (plus 3 additional scrimmage dates to be conducted after the end of the fall term, and to be played only during weekends and other non-scheduled class dates.)

SECTION F: Conference Volleyball

- 1. The official conference volleyball to be used for all Heart of America play is the Molten IV58L Super Touch Red/White/Blue ball.

SECTION G: Officials/Line Judges

1. A first and second referee will be assigned on a central basis for all regular season and postseason play.
2. Every effort will be made to assign 2 line judges but when necessary, it will be a responsibility of the institutions to assign line judges which may include men's volleyball players. Payment will be at the discretion of the institution. Attire is to be professional (navy/black/khaki pants or shorts with closed toed shoes).
 - a. Coordinator will be informed by January 15 of match dates and locations for which officials will be required.
 - b. Schools will receive a list of all conference officials complete with addresses and social security numbers.
 - c. Coordinator will normally identify which official will be the first referee.
3. Coaches are asked to submit performance feedback for each of the match officials after each match through the Arbiter system.
4. Faculty, staff, or students associated with member institutions will not be allowed to officiate any Varsity HEART volleyball play involving their institution.
5. Minimum certification for a first or second referee to work HEART contests will be State level PAVO or Regional level USAV.
6. An official's rate schedule will be reviewed every two years.
7. Expenses for Supervisor of Officials and RefQuest will be covered by a stipend at the level of \$325 per institution to be provided annually. The designated supervisor will report to the Heart commissioner.

SECTION H: Match Protocol and Hosting

1. The host institution will provide:
 - a. A minimum of ten practice balls for the visiting team.
 - b. Athletic training support.
 - c. Quality official conference game balls.
 - d. Court side water and cups.
2. It is recommended that the host institution provide:
 - a. A three-ball return system.
 - b. A public address system and an announcer to call the match.
 - c. Uniformed linespersons, when necessary.
 - d. Written protocol outline.

3. Standard protocol will include:
 - a. Prayer for institutions who so choose.
 - b. Presentation of the National Anthem.
 - c. Introduction of starters – to include the libero if appropriate.
 - d. Captain and then player greeting at the net prior to play.
 - e. On game court warm up prior to a varsity contest will be a minimum of 30 minutes unless modified by mutual agreement.
4. The following NAIA protocol model will be used in all scheduled conference play to begin 30 minutes before match time:
 - a. 10 shared court
 - b. 4 visiting team (entire court)
 - c. 4 home team (entire court)
 - d. 5 visiting team attack
 - e. 5 home team attack
5. Local promotions are permissible during regular and postseason contests. There is only 5 minutes between games 2 and 3. Guest teams will be appraised in advance and have the option to request up to two minutes of on-court warm up prior to resuming play if desired.
6. Senior recognition will only be acceptable in conjunction with regular season contests.

SECTION I: Sports Information

1. The home team is responsible to record and provide statistics for both teams in all Heart competition. Entry into the Presto Stats system will be the responsibility of each respective team.
2. The NAIA/Heart on-line SID service will provide ongoing statistical and sports information support to volleyball during the season and through the post-season series.
3. Institutions will submit match by match results and statistics through the NAIA/Heart and Presto Stats services. A teams schedule in SID Help and Presto must accurately identify all regular season Heart Conference matches. These services will in turn become the databases from which the Heart SID's will work.

4. Nominations for Setter of the week, Defender of the week and Attacker of the week must be submitted through your institution's SID each weekend. Deadline: 9:30 AM each Monday of the reporting season. Weekly selections will be made by conference SID's.
5. Conference standings, statistical leaders and players of the week will be available on an ongoing basis.
6. The Heart Assistant Commissioner will forward the HEART Attacker, Setter and Defender of the week nominees on for national consideration.
7. The NAIA SID department will access team and player statistics through the national reporting system for inclusion in National reports.

SECTION J: Poll Process

1. The Heart of America poll will be submitted to the Heart of America oversight committee.

SECTION K: All-Conference, Player and Coach of the Year Process

1. Selections will be made at the annual coaches meeting.
2. A coach may submit their players for consideration as follows:

Finish	# of Potential Nominations
1-3	7
4-6	5
7-10	4
11-13	2
14-16	1

3. Student-athletes must compete in at least 66% of their team's total sets during the regular season and conference tournament. National tournament participation is excluded from the calculation.

4. Nominees must be submitted by email arriving on or before Monday preceding the annual coaches meeting to:

Stew McDole
Graceland University

One University Place
Lamoni, IA 50140
Fax: 641-784-5472
Phone: 641-784-5315
Email: mcdole@graceland.edu

5. Statistics will be compiled, analyzed and sent to each league coach for use in considering their selections.
6. Selections:
 - a. 14 players to first team
 - b. 14 players to second team
 - c. 14 players to third team
 - d. Honorable Mention (awarded any player receiving at least one vote)
 - e. Heart Player of the Year
 - f. Heart Setter of the Year
 - g. ~~Heart Defensive Player of the Year~~
 - h. Heart Freshman of the Year (The highest-selected freshman in the All-Conference voting process will be recognized as Freshman of the Year.)
 - i. Heart Assistant Coach of the Year (any conference assistant coach is eligible)
 - j. Heart Coach of the Year (any conference head coach is eligible)
7. Nominees for Freshman of the Year will be limited to players who are in their freshman year academically and who have not previously represented the nominee school or another Heart school in either varsity or junior varsity volleyball competition.
8. Each coach may vote for a total of 38 additional players for recognition with a point system of 38 points descending to 1 point.
 - a. (Effectively voting for ninth through twenty eighth places respectively.)
Coaches will not be allowed to vote for their own players. They may, however, leave blanks on the ballot in the spots where they feel their own players belong.
9. Subsequent to the all-conference ballot vote the balance of the first team selection will be ranked by consensus.

10. The Heart of America Assistant Coach of the Year and Coach of the Year will be selected by ballot.
 - a. The successful candidate must have received a majority vote of the ballots submitted.
 - b. A second or third ballot will be utilized as necessary to attain a selection with majority support.
11. All ballots will be submitted to the Co-rep. The Co-rep will tally ballots and provide results to the Heart Assistant Commissioner for release by the NAIA specified submission deadline.
12. Completed selections will be submitted to the NAIA as the Heart nominees for National Player of the Year, Coach of the Year and All-America consideration.
13. Ballots will subsequently be reviewed and revised as necessary to provide a slate of AVCA qualified nominees for NAIA/AVCA All-Region, Freshman of the Year, Region Assistant Coach of the Year, Region Coach of the Year and subsequent national consideration. (All nominees must come from institutions where the Head Coach is a member of the AVCA.) Qualified selections will be forwarded for AVCA/NAIA review.

SECTION L: Awards

1. Championship Banner for regular season champion. In the event of Co-Champions, each team will receive a banner.
2. Plaques will be provided for 1st team all-conference and the following specialty awards:
 - a. Player of the Year
 - b. Setter of the Year
 - c. ~~Defender of the Year~~
 - d. Libero of the Year
 - e. Middle of the Year
 - f. Attacker of the Year
 - g. Freshman of the Year
 - h. Assistant Coach of the Year
 - i. Coach of the Year
3. A trophy will be provided to the winner of the Heart of America postseason (national tournament qualifier).

4. All award orders will be placed through the conference office.

SECTION M: Breast Cancer Awareness Emphasis

1. The Heart of America volleyball institutions declare a week in October each year as a week for special attention to breast cancer awareness. Institutions are encouraged to observe it with appropriate activities.

SECTION N: Scouting

1. Heart coaches are free to exchange information (oral, written or video) relative to any opponent (Heart or non-conference) with other HEART coaches at their own discretion. Further they may share information about non-conference opponents with anyone they choose to.
2. No information or video on HEART teams will be shared with non-conference teams.
3. HUDL/Volleymetrics will be the exclusive 3rd party provider for video exchange.
4. HUDL/Volleymetrics will provide a full, open and unlimited conference exchange environment.
5. Dual season conference play, tournaments and non-conference play will be video recorded by the host school. They are subsequently expected to post the video (on behalf of both teams) to the Heart HUDL/Volleymetrics account within 24 hours of completion. Saturday matches must be uploaded by midnight on the following Sunday.
6. Schools will post a minimum of 2 non-conference matches (if they have played 2 or more) that precede their HEART opener.
7. The preferred camera angle is from baseline.
8. Required standards:
 - a. All video should be shot from above and from an area behind the end line.
 - b. All action should be filmed.

- c. All video should include all 12 players, natural audio (horn) and show the scoreboard as possible.
- d. The camera should be set to zoom enough to see clear and distinct jersey numbers for both teams, the entire court, the ball and all twelve players.

APPENDIX: Leadership

- 1. Chair: Molly Karagyaurov, MidAmerica Nazarene (2026 & 2027)
 - a. Chair Heart Volleyball committee
 - b. Server as Heart rating coordinator
 - c. Chair the Heart tournament committee
 - d. Serve as convener and chair of all coach's meetings
- 2. Vice-Chair Officiating: Deb Marlin, Mount Mercy (2026, 2027)
 - a. Liaison with assignors to assure assignment of officials
 - b. Coordinate evaluation of officials
 - c. Heart Volleyball committee member
 - d. Heart tournament committee member
 - e. Heart rating committee member
- 3. Voter/ARC Chair: Victoria Hurtt, Benedictine (2027, 2028)
 - a. Serve as the Heart "Voter" or "ARC representative" in the national coaches' poll
 - b. Heart Volleyball committee member
 - c. Heart tournament committee member
 - d. Heart NAIA/AVCA Head Coach Committee Representative

4. Vice-Chair Recognition: Nils Nielsen, Baker (2027, 2028)
 - a. Heart Awards coordinator
 - b. NAIA/AVCA Recognition Representative
 - c. Heart Volleyball committee member
 - d. Heart tournament committee member
 - e. Heart rating committee member