



TEAM ONTARIO BASEBALL

The National Letter of Intent - A Little History

The basic purpose of the National Letter of Intent (NLI) is to reduce recruiting time and expense for the institution and limit recruiting pressure on the prospective student-athlete. The National Letter of Intent Program is administered by the Collegiate Commissioners Association (CCA).

The National Letter was founded in 1964 by Dr. William Davis, Professor of Government and Faculty Representative at Texas Tech University. He received valuable assistance from Howard Grubbs, Commissioner of the Southwest Conference. Fred Jacoby was appointed Chair of the National Letter of Intent Steering Committee in 1973 and served in that capacity until June 1995. In January 1995, the CCA appointed the Southeastern Conference as the national NLI office and Roy Kramer as the Chair of the NLI Steering Committee. In addition to Roy Kramer, current members of the NLI Steering Committee are Karl Benson, Commissioner of the Western Athletic Conference, Chris Monasch, Commissioner of the America East Conference, Thomas Yeager, Commissioner of the Colonial Athletic Conference, and Britton Banowsky, Associate Commissioner of the Big Twelve Conference.

From 1964 to 1973, the NLI rules were very firm and rigid with little flexibility. For example, there was one signing date for all sports (May 20), a loss of two seasons of competition in all sports if a student-athlete did not attend the signing institution for one academic year, and there were very few appeals to these rules were ever considered.

Since 1973, the keys to the success of the NLI have been: (1) flexibility - as with NCAA rules, every NLI rule was adopted to resolve a problem; (2) the NLI is voluntary with annual registration by those conferences and institutions that want to join; and (3) institutions willingly want the NLI to work.

Regarding litigation, in the 30-year history of the NLI, the CCA has never been in court, although threatened frequently. The NLI is a voluntary agreement and not a contract. No prospective student or parent is required to sign the Letter, and no institution is required to join the program. It is strictly voluntary on an annual registration basis.

Originally, the NLI was on one page (front and back). A standard response to adding a new rule was "Don't suggest a new rule unless it can fit onto one page." In 1991, the NLI expanded to a four-page foldout to: (a) combine the men and women's NLI into one Letter and (b) combine official interpretations and rules into one document for clarification and to avoid litigation.

Former Pacific-10 Conference Associate Commissioner David Price and the Conference's legal counsel were instrumental in revising the form of the NLI and are to be commended.

Every NLI rule has a history. Some examples are:

Provision No. 13 - 14-day Signing Deadline: Prospective student-athletes were holding several NLI's waiting to determine if they would receive a better grant-in-aid from the institution of their choice. Provision No. 14 - Institutional 21-day Filing Deadline: Coaches would hold signed NLI's in their sport sorting out the ones they wanted to keep and rejecting the others before filing. Provision No. 11 - Parent/Guardian Signature Required - To avoid undue pressure on the student and to encourage family counsel in the final decision.

The NCAA national office receives a large number of telephone calls from persons who believe the NLI is administered by the NCAA. These calls are referred by the NCAA to the NLI national office and to the conference offices. Telephone calls from parents and relatives, prospective student-athletes, student-athletes wanting to transfer, high school coaches and guidance counselors, NCAA coaches, athletic directors, Junior College and NAIA coaches and directors of athletics, journalists and attorneys, all seeking interpretations and/or guidance are not uncommon.

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