



**National Athletic Trainers' Association Official Statement
in Support of New NCAA Autonomous 5 (aka Power 5) Conferences'
Independent Medical Care Rules**

The National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA) applauds the recent NCAA ruling that secures medical autonomy for the sports medicine staff at colleges and universities in its Autonomous 5 conferences. This new ruling affirms that the primary health care providers (defined as athletic trainers and team physicians) have the final decision-making authority regarding student athletes' medical management and return to play following injury or illness. More specifically, if a team physician or athletic trainer determines an athlete should be held out for medical reasons, a coach cannot override him or her under any circumstance. The regulation goes a step further by creating an administrative structure, free of influence from the coach, which protects the primary athletic health care provider when making such decisions.

The new Autonomous 5 rules incorporate many recommendations from the *Inter-Association Consensus Statement on Best Practices for Sports Medicine Management for Secondary Schools and Colleges*. The 2013 document was developed by a task force spearheaded by NATA that included representatives from leading health care and sports organizations and became the foundation for Inter-Association Consensus Guidelines released by the NCAA, which then led to these new rules. The recommendations specifically address sports medicine procedures and decision-making authority for student athlete participation.

While the best practices document serves as a recommendation, the Autonomous 5 rules go a step further. By mandating that schools have a director of medical services and providing autonomous authority to the sports medicine staff, the new policy should help eliminate potential conflicts of interest, ensuring the health and well-being of the student athlete remains paramount. This ruling also sets a precedent that all programs and conferences can model.

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