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In normal years, October 1 signifies the official start of the season for NCAA winter sport programs and teams begin preparing in earnest for their upcoming fall tournament schedule.

As we all know, 2020 has not been business as usual so the start of in-season activities is being met with many more questions than answers.

“The Covid-19 pandemic has thrown the normal rhythm of the NCAA bowling season out of kilter,” according to Kayla Bandy, head coach at Maryland-Eastern Shore and the secretary of the National Ten Pin Coaches Association (NTCA). “We all await word from the NCAA and our own conferences and institutions on the next steps but at the same time, we must keep planning for when – or if – we get the green light to proceed.”

There are 88 NCAA bowling teams certified for the 2020-21 season, comprised of 34 Division I programs, 34 Division II and 20 Division III schools. There are also nine conferences and all but two – the Great Lakes Valley Conference (GLVC) and the Southland Bowling League (SBL) – have indicated they will wait until the spring semester to begin play. The Great Lakes and Southland are planning to begin on a normal fall schedule.

The leagues that will wait until spring include the Allegheny Mountain Collegiate Conference (AMCC), the College Conference of Illinois and Wisconsin (CCIW), the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association (CIAA), the East Coast Conference (ECC), the North East Conference (NEC), the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference (MEAC), and the Southwestern Athletic Conference (SWAC).



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There are four fall tournaments penciled into the NCAA calendar at this time:

- Oct. 23-25 Bearcat Hammer Open (Fairview Heights, Ill./McKendree)
- Oct. 30-Nov 1 Crusader Classic (Hobart, Ind./Valparaiso)
- Nov. 13-15 SFA Ladyjack Hammer Classic (Kenosha, Wis./Stephen F. Austin)
- Nov. 13-15 Alabama State Hornet Classic (Montgomery, Ala/Alabama State)

“It is incredibly important that these fall tournaments, if they are to be held, are handled correctly in regard to Covid-19 testing policies and protocols,” Bandy said. “We have to demonstrate that our programs and our organization can comply with the health and safety of our student-athletes and staffs. Those of us who will not have the opportunity to compete this fall, look forward to competing in the spring.”

The first NTCA poll is expected to be released October 12. There was no national championship conducted in 2019 as the pandemic shutdown in mid-March ended all post-season competition.