

DIVISION I

FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

TAKE NOTE OF THE FOLLOWING DEFINITIONS:

Access: “the right to approach, enter or use;
Include: “taking in as an element or a part of the whole.”

These are dear words to many of us as we await our conference (Northeast Conference) automatic qualifier (AQ). The AQ is a nod of approval for many of us, like you, who have been playing on a field 100 yards long, grinding out our own first downs ... getting to the red zone, but denied the right to score ... too many times. Now, we have our chance, and we are grateful and ready! Like Monmouth University's Miles Austin who, after setting a Dallas Cowboys receiving record, stated: “I was ready to play and wanted to show my teammates that I could contribute.”



Marilyn McNeil



Well, those of us waiting for an AQ are ready to play and we want to show our teammates in the Football Championship Subdivision (FCS) that we can contribute. We hope to be able to contribute with winning scores and games, exemplary playmaking by our capable athletes, and superstar academics, but I think it is important to think about how else we may contribute and what access means for all of the FCS!

It means in the Northeast Conference alone:

- There will be 900 football student-athletes who will become student fans of the FCS and pay attention to the championship series.
- We will talk about the FCS championship at more than 50 home games every fall.
- We will highlight the FCS in nine football recruiting guides every year.
- There will be nine Web sites that follow the FCS opportunity every week in the fall.
- We will talk about the FCS to at least 18 media outlets every weekend in the fall.
- We will boast our FCS AQ to at least 1,000 high school recruits every year.
- We will include FCS highlights in at least nine university view books and ad campaigns every year.

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- There will be 51,142 students at our institutions who will now care about the FCS and follow the championship.
- There will be at least 1,000 Northeast Conference faculty, staff and administrators who will know what the letters FCS mean.
- There will be at least 900 parents or guardians who will follow the championship.
- There will be at least 12,750 new graduates who will know about the FCS.
- There will be an infinite number of alumni across the country that will learn about the FCS.
- There will be a new group of media and fans that will ask the question: Who will get the Northeast Conference AQ for the FCS?
- There will be new blogs about all these acronyms.
- Finally, there will be nine athletics directors, nine head coaches, nine presidents and one commissioner who will sweat it out for three months in the fall.

It's all good! Good for the Northeast Conference and good for the Football Championship Subdivision. We look forward to helping the growth of FCS football! Thanks for the access!

As for inclusion: As I write from the desk of a female athletics director, one who believes in opportunity for all, I reflect on work of the NCAA Gender-Equity Task force. It stated that “an athletics program can be considered gender equitable when the participants in both the men's and women's sports programs would accept as fair and equitable the overall program of the other gender. No individual should be discriminated against on the basis of gender, institutionally or nationally, in intercollegiate athletics.”

The new AQ has given the Northeast Conference inclusion. If we substitute ‘football’ for ‘gender’ in the definition above, we have a football equitable FCS and I am proud to endorse football equity as passionately as one endorses gender equity. Thanks for including us!

Thanks for this article to Marilyn McNeil, director of athletics at Monmouth University and FCS ADA 2nd Vice President.