

A welcome change of heart

Written by Scott Unash

Tuesday, 08 November 2011 21:29 - Last Updated Tuesday, 08 November 2011 21:47



I must admit that I was shocked when I heard the news.

After all, it was unprecedented.

Last week the Iowa High School Athletic Association took the first steps to keep 4A football from moving to districts, like the other five classes in the state are playing. Most coaches, players, fans, and I must admit media members thought it was a foregone conclusion that the Week 9 games would signal the end of conference play forever, or at least a good long time. After all, when the IHSAA considered a plan or sent out questionnaires or ballots, the verdict was nearly always predetermined, the plan was going into effect.

But not this time.

Athletic directors and administrators from all 47 of the 4A schools met with with the IHSAA last week in Boone. The IHSAA wanted to hear their input on the proposal to start district football for Class 4A. From what we have heard, the battle lines were drawn between the eastern half of the state and the central and western schools.

The five schools of the Missouri River Conference were looking to cut down on travel and expenses of playing nonconference foes from the Central Iowa Metro League. Some of the driving distances were fairly astronomical considering these are high school athletes. The eastern schools of the Mississippi Valley and Mississippi Athletic Conferences, for the most part, wanted to keep the status quo of conference play since it had been working for many decades without any problems.

Who would win?

A welcome change of heart

Written by Scott Unash

Tuesday, 08 November 2011 21:29 - Last Updated Tuesday, 08 November 2011 21:47

Turns out everyone. The final decision has to come down from the IHSAA's Board of Control, but it appears that the eastern conferences will keep their league play while the central and western teams will go to district play. The Missouri River schools will get to play non-district games against foes from other classes that are closer to them and not have to travel ridiculous distances for games. The playoff format will remain the same. It's a win-win for everyone.

At least for two years. But the question will be looked at again at that time, and things will have changed. Right now the CIML consists of 18 teams and the Missouri River Conference has five, a perfect arrangement for the district play. Four districts, one with five teams and the other three with six. However the balance is going to be lost in a couple of years when new Ankeny Centennial High School opens. The math then does not work out equally for district play in the central and west.

That bridge will be crossed. Until then let the speculation begin. Will there be district 4A football across the state? Will there be a college-like shift in conferences across the state? How many new schools will be opening in the next decade that will be in Class 4A? All are legitimate questions that will be looked at and analyzed every two years.

What we do know is that the MVC is going to be sticking around for at least two more seasons in football and that is a good thing for all involved. Thanks to the administrators from the eastern schools that fought for the continuation of conference play and also a big thanks to the IHSAA for seeing how important this was to the coaches, players, administrators and fans of the MVC and the MAC, and listening to their wishes. Well done.

(Scott Unash is the sports and program director at KGYM-AM 1600. He is a six-time winner of the Iowa Broadcast News Association play-by-play Announcer of the Year Award. Scott and Mark Dukes co-host the Gym Class weekdays from 3-4 p.m. on KGYM)