

Dear Saints: Don't choose 3A football

Written by Jim Ecker

Monday, 11 November 2013 18:05 -

Here is an open letter to Xavier High School as it gets ready to debate the future of its football program.

TO:

Tom Keating, Xavier Principal
Mike Winker, Xavier Athletic Director
Duane Schulte, Xavier Football Coach

FROM:

Jim Ecker, President
Metro Sports Report

DEAR SIRS:

Please don't do it.

Please don't vote in favor of moving your highly successful football program from Class 4A to Class 3A.

Yes, you are entitled to do it. And yes, it's presumptuous for a sportswriter to tell you what to do, but somebody has to say something before it's too late.

Please don't do it.

You folks have one of the best Class 4A football programs in the entire state, despite competing against bigger schools on a regular basis. There is no reason to change, unless you simply want to make it a little easier (perhaps) to win state titles.

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Let's look at the facts.

Xavier has compiled an overall record of 109-58 against Class 4A competition since the school opened for business in 1998.

You've made 10 trips to the Class 4A playoffs in 16 years and have won four Mississippi Valley Conference titles.

You captured the Class 4A state title in 2006. You finished second in 2012. You reached the Final 4 in 2009 and again this year. You made the Final 8 in 2008.

Why leave now? You are doing very well. In fact, you've got the best record - by far - among Metro schools the past 16 years.

You've rolled up an amazing 24-2 record the last two seasons heading into the semifinals Friday against Bettendorf in the UNI-Dome.

You outscored your opponents last year by a whopping margin of 548-121. You've outscored them 372-61 this season, with possibly two more games to go.

In the last two years, you've battered your opponents by a combined total of 920-182 with 11 shutouts in 26 games.

Why leave?

You have a 13-2 record against Linn-Mar since 1988, a 13-3 mark against Jefferson, a 13-5

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record against Prairie, a 12-5 record against Kennedy (with four straight shutouts against the Cougars). Washington is the only Metro school that's had your number, beating you eight of 11 times.

The Mississippi Valley Conference plays some of the best football in the state. Do you really want to leave and compete at the Class 3A level?

The IHSAA could put you in a Class 3A district with Decorah (9-0), West Delaware (8-1), Cresco (5-4), Western Dubuque (4-5), Independence (4-5), Vinton-Shellsburg (2-7) and Oelwein (0-9).

Another possible Class 3A district could include Solon (8-1), Maquoketa (6-3), Central DeWitt (4-5), Marion (4-5), Clear Creek-Amana (4-5), Benton Community (2-7) and Anamosa (0-9).

Potential games against Decorah, West Delaware and Solon might be interesting, but how about some of the others? Do your fans really want to see you play Oelwein or Anamosa? Do your players? Your sophomore team could probably beat some of those schools.

Please think of the bigger picture. If you vote in favor of district football in the next month or two, you'll be voting to dismantle the Mississippi Valley Conference as a football league. It wouldn't be entirely your fault, but you would play a role.

You might be able to face some of those MVC teams in non-district games in the future, but maybe not. If you switch to Class 3A for football, some of those Class 4A schools might prefer to play other 4A schools and not look your way.

Do you really want to jeopardize your rivalries with the other Metro schools? Do you want to risk drawing smaller crowds (and diminished gate receipts) for your home games?

It would be different if the Saints were getting pounded in football, because then it would make

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sense to drop to a lower level. It might make sense to switch five or 10 years from now if your fortunes change at the Class 4A level, but not now. Not when things are going so well.

Please don't do it. Please don't vote in favor of district football. Please don't toss all this fun and excitement away.

It's not worth it.