

# DISCUSSION TOPIC #1

## Football-Only Conference Realignment/Football District Plan/Football All-Play

### **Mt. Horeb:**

Under 200 for 8-man championship, high for surrounding states

Numbers going down? Varied reasons

9th grade starting late? Not good for smaller schools,

Low numbers - not early start issue but puts burden on family

Early start - difficult for coaches to make it work, change of schedule

Does school starting earlier make a difference - yes but skeptical it could occur

District plan - football is a numbers game - good limiting discrepancy in enrollments if football is a numbers game. This addresses the numbers game concern of equitable approach. Rigid on enrollment is easiest way to equalize opponents in conference. Flexibility conference especially at Division 5 or 6. Can't eliminate all divisions. Lower level not included

Blended football only conference - Flexibility with geography. This benefits lower level travel concerns. Seems to be a good compromise. All or part of 6 conferences have looked at this option. Leave lower level out. Eliminates lower level crossover.

Helpful to restrict schedule length and number of divisions in other sports, makes 8 game season more palatable to football instead of increased opportunities.

Once actual splits occur, selfish concern of assignments, need to make match-up plan independent of procedural discussion

Southwest part of the state has a plan for 34 schools to have 4 football varsity only conferences read to go for Fall 2019

- Group was willing to move back the start date.
- Playing one less game (8 Game Season) is a viable option. Athletic Directors want 8 games Coaches want 9 games.
- Everyone understood that this issue needs to be addressed.
- Edgewood looking at getting out of the Badger Conference. Not able to provide all levels of play
- Group in favor of Football Only Conference Realignment Plan. Interested in a nine team conference realignment plan. Revisiting the realignment plan every two years and looking at enrollments is a plus.
- Some school districts that border Iowa and Minnesota can not seek those schools for non-conference games.
- Understand that enrollment is a factor in realignment plan.
- School start date is a factor starting Football on August 1 and starting school after September 1.

Smaller schools that still sponsor 11-man are worried about what their conference partnerships will look like with an 8-man playoff

Co-op will dissolve and conferences will lose 11 man fb games

District and FB Only need to include Lower level commitments to ensure all levels get games and we aren't cutting our nose off to spite our face.

FB Only Conferences need to be 10 team conf so larger border schools aren't struggling to find NC game

Fox Valley Lutheran:

Rep from Central WI conferences

More teams are dropping their football programs about a week into the season and it makes it tough to reschedule...something needs to change

More teams are opting for 8-Man...makes scheduling difficult

FdL Area

Need something to keep our conferences together and all for a district

District Plan has merits...what can we take from that plan?

Could bigger conferences be a solution?

Football Only Conference

Okay with losing some of the rivalries if it means we are playing same size teams

These are more things of the past...not for our current kids

We've developed new rivalries in our new conferences

All-Play

Not a good idea as no one wants to put a 9-0 vs 0-9 (no one wins)

Early start

Something has to change if we want to grow the sport...need to start later

8 Divisions? (What is it that we make most attractive for football?)

We want to provide as many Friday nights as we can. How about more regular games and less tournament games. 10 games vs 9 games...there are realistically less teams fighting for state championships

Need competitive games during the year the best that we can.

Football conference only was thought of favorably, despite the fact that for the individual district it might not be the best. Big picture it was thought of as positive.

District Plan only. One football coach indicated that he also thought consideration of the plan was rushed by membership. The plan seems good, details would need time to get worked out. Questions of how often it would change. Periodically means what? Two years, four years?

A couple of times a question or comment about how frequently conferences or districts would change was asked.

Lower level football is a question. Because many schools are not fielding lower level teams, JV and Varsity only might be WIAA and then let local schools determine lower level.

Regarding 8 versus 9 games... one coach wants the opportunity to get playing time. 9 games mandatory. Not having 9 games would "take opportunities from kids."

One AD could go either way with an all play or district only. They are already playing non "play off" games.

Mixed conference "football only" was "a disastrous". The fans were not interested. More in favor of a district plan in comparison of football only conference. Both conferences involved would like to go back to the way they were before merging to football only conferences. The challenge of the district plan is, "who do you play next, who is in your circle."

Possibility of moving state championships at different locations. Madison feels empty. Whitewater is a nice facility. If no consideration was given to the TV contract, or other details, would be in of moving state championship games to some of the other great venues we have in the state.

Some discussion was had over once you see who is in your district, will you be able to qualify for the playoffs. Maybe the top 4 or top 5 teams should qualify. What if 5 and 6 look strong, should they qualify? Would there be flexibility depending on districts on who would be able to qualify?

One AD expressed a desire to keep the lower levels connected. If the district plan is adopted, they would like to keep those lower levels connected and maintain some semblance of “the community feel of conference play maintained.”

An expression of leaving things the way they are was expressed. One AD liked how one season flows into the other seasons.

All play is not something of interest

Status quo - some travel has been issue and rivalries

More smaller schools

Making adjustments with not starting early - paid the price by getting beat - what is best for football program.

Football only conference working up north

Start of football season -

Eliminate scrimmage -

District plan - about 1/2 , enrollment

Playoffs hard to get

Football drives re-alignment

Gates are down in VFA

Some stability would be nice

How do we determine the Football only conference? Who decides this?

No interest in All Play - kids check out when you are at the end of a losing season

May see the same problems as we do with conference realignment with schools being unhappy with where they get placed in Football only conference or district

8 out of 20 stay status quo

Concerned about stacking Districts

3 games before school starts is tough

Most agreed that football drives conference realignment

Mauston:

No to the all-play.

8 Game seasons seem like a realistic possibility to help give relief to schools with the start date and to schools struggling with numbers. Coaches may not like 8 game season but there may not be a way around it.

District plan is the best model for small and mid-sized schools when talking about competitive equity in this sport. Football only conferences may be good too?

Can the state legislature pass something that prohibits full contact for youth football until 7th or 8th grade.

One school wants to stay with status quo - Holmen (based on current plan) out of 12  
More travel for Holmen - disagree with District  
Mel-Min = travel not an issue  
G-E-T - willing to travel, already have conference cross over games that require travel of 2+ hours  
All play - see more forfeits  
0-9 vs 9-0 happens already, just happens in week 2  
District plan would be they way to go – from up north  
8 man is having a large effect in northwest corner  
All play would help struggling football teams that have not made the playoffs in years  
Plan from 6-7 years ago wouldn't be bad for MVC, but like current conference  
Lower level games - schools already struggle to find games in some situations - district play wouldn't change this  
Groupings - people disagree with who they would have to play - don't release who you will play until you agree with the plan  
Aquinas needs to get out of MVC - district plan would help  
Status quo - preferred over the most recent plan (Holmen)

New Lisbon-Scenic Bluffs and Ridge and Valley (Have a plan) Status Quo  
Football Only submitted by Kurt Cohen to the WIAA Office  
3-8's and 1-10 team  
Enrollments currently within 104 students in this plan

No one in favor of all play  
District plan and football only have some similarities

"If we stick with 9 games, Aug 1st start is our only option."

FB coaches do not want to lose games

A percentage of kids do NOT come out due to very early start, compared to Sept 1 school start date.

No to Status quo...  
District plan or football only need further discussions...  
All-Play NO

Keep the discussion going.

Oconomowoc:

Clinton - coach would want to compete vs. competitive sized schools - equity would be important

Smaller school issue - some conferences are losing teams to 8-man football and that is making smaller teams that play 11-man football more difficult to find teams to play; travel is inevitable (Cambria Friesland)

District plan could utilize neutral sites for games?

JV schedules have been lost in some areas - does this mean that the district model could be better than the conference model as you are finding lower-level games anyways?

No one in the group in favor of the all-play model

Are opinions set (whether schools favor district vs. conference) when schools/teams make the playoffs?

Where are all the kids? Why are the numbers down? (Example: Edgar doesn't start tackle football until 8th grade). Are kids burned out?

What is unrealistic travel? The Clinton coached, who formerly coached in AZ, had to travel, at times, up to 5 hours for a conference game.

All-Play

Against All-Play (those vocal in group are against All-Play)

Never witnessed an 0-8 or 8-0 team looking to play again

District Plan

Travel is not a big problem

Many of the bigger schools would be in the same conference (Arrowhead, Germantown, etc.) and those schools aren't in favor of the plan

Whitewater-there are enrollment "discrepancies"

Program is struggling with numbers

Some athletes are not coming out because the season starts too early

Anything to assist with numbers would be positive

Football-Only Conference Realignment

No notable comments

Rice Lake:

Problems with declining numbers help with conference disparity. And early start

Keep lower level in conference.

Majority of Lakeland conference coaches like the later start.

Scheduling is a problem for border schools.

How do we handle travel - do varsity only.

Some concern over early release from school..

If it happens in the southwest it will probably move across the state we should implement and stay ahead of this.

Less games before school starts.

Conferences who lost teams to 8 man would like more relief for scheduling.

We had a straw poll.

22 in favor - 2 oppose - 2 undecided

8 vs. 9 Game Argument

State Championships in other states are being played before Thanksgiving. - move it back like MN, then the early start doesn't have to happen. (indoor facilities?)

Eliminate the scrimmage: shot down by medical advisory.

More pressure on winter sports start date.

Rivalry idea gone by the wayside with Co-ops absorbing rivalries already.

District Plan - the original negative reasons have passed.

Schools in Favor of District Plan in Blue Group: Hayward

Move furthest game on schedule to first week of season before school starts so the late ride home isn't an issue.

Subvarsity scheduling still done by conference

Antigo:

Group preferred status quo because of the volatility and the lack of consistency within conferences.

Enrollment being the only determining factor for Districts is a concern, especially for Co-op 8-man State Championship, while a positive move, is causing more uncertainty of the direction of 11-man with our smaller schools.

Football only mergers with conferences of like size have been beneficials to Northern Lakes/M&O/Packerland

District Plan allows for later start, we are starting too early

Solid schedule

Allows for more periodic realignment

Would it be worthwhile to look at a district plan for Divisions 1-3 or 4. Small school conferences in certain parts of the state are getting together to create their own crossover agreements. For larger school enrollments, particularly west of the Fox Valley and North of Madison, there are few options. LaCrosse to Superior and Hudson to Stevens Point.

Northern Lakes/M & O/Packerland - basically doing District with Big 11, Small 11, and conference for 8 man.

District plan would allow for a week later start - we are starting too early right now.

Kids are choosing work over football because of early start date at start of August.

Division 5-7 not that big of a difference - probably playing lots of the same teams as we would right now.

Longer road games can have some positives with team bonding, but obviously there are negatives to long travel in terms of cost, distances, etc.

Counterpoint - travel is 4 or 5 times a year, usually on Friday night or Saturday for the varsity level.

Back in 2009-2010, there was no 8 man football - so districts would be different than they were in 2009-2010.

District plan "blew up" when matchups were shown and teams saw potential loss of playoffs.