

WIAA Football Proposals: A review and recommendation

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The membership of the WIAA, the Board of Control (BOC), the Wisconsin Football Coaches Association (WFCA), and the WIAA Executive Staff have had some productive, insightful discussions and meetings involving football, the football season, and the football state tournament structure. It has been an outstanding process from the district plan to where we are today.

The District Plan

At the June, 25, 2009, WIAA BOC meeting site, Deb Hauser and Wade Labecki began looking at a football plan which would address realignment in conferences due to the success of schools in the sport of football. Three concerns were to be addressed: inability of schools to schedule, enrollment differentials in existing conferences which affects playoff eligibility, and concerns with three games in ten days at the end of the regular season and beginning of the tournament. The plan called for all football playing schools to be assigned to a district based on school enrollment which was divided into seven divisions. The top four winners of one district would advance to play the top four winners in another district.

Hauser and Labecki took the enrollments of the school placed them into seven divisions of 64 and then formed eight districts of eight schools based on geography. Maps were then developed and on July 9, 2009, the plan was presented to John Hoch, the Wisconsin Football Coaches Association (WFCA) president and Dick Rundle, the WFCA Executive Director for their thoughts. (BOC, August 7, 2009)

With the response from Hoch and Rundle, Labecki presented the plan to the WFCFA Board of Directors at their Board meeting at the WFCFA All-Star game in Oshkosh on the third Saturday of July (19, 2009). Some support for the plan was present, but some opposition was present as well. The plan would be presented to the BOC in August of 2009.

The district plan was discussed at the BOC meeting on August 7, 2009 (BOC, August 7, 2009). Procedures for making the plan public before meeting with the BOC was discussed, but focus was placed on the benefits of the plan. At this point it was just an idea. The options were status quo, the District Plan, or all-play. Mark Gobler mentioned that the plan was a good visionary process, but would meet resistance as it moved up the chain of command. Roger Foegen mentioned that travel would affect school budgets. Most BOC members expressed a dislike for all-play (BOC, August 7, 2009).

At the October 16, 2009, BOC meeting, the BOC members discussed the public/private basketball issue and the football district plan (BOC, October 16, 2009). The math department at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point would be able to develop schedules for the entire state using the groupings developed in the District plan. An implementation date would be needed. Foegen wanted detail. A 2010 implementation date was recommended. Mary Pfeiffer stated that she felt rushed and noted that coaches were against the District Plan and travel concerns (BOC, October 16, 2009).

Jim Smasal felt if the plan was implemented in 2010 rather than 2011, it would feel like it was being shoved down peoples' throats (BOC, October 16, 2009). In a show of hands, the vote was 9-1 in support of implementation in 2010 with Smasal opposed.

At the December 4, 2009, BOC Meeting, the District plan was being discussed and as the communications were going to the administrators in the school districts the feeling was not as positive as the straw vote at WADA (BOC, December 4, 2009). While support for the District Plan at the BOC was positive, the BOC stated that Labecki would tell the football coaches that if the plan failed by the coaches, the BOC wanted the three games in ten days addressed (BOC, December 4, 2009).

The Football Coaches Advisory Committee (FBCA) met on December 15, 2009 (FBCA, December 15, 2009). Discussion was animated and strong. Dave Keel is concerned that some individuals on the WFCA Board of Directors felt the change should be delayed until 2011. Al Minneart suggested that schools in some districts could play their freshmen and JV games with the district if possible based on travel, as long as schools have games. A motion was made and passed:

- A motion was made (Sarver/Rogatzki) to move forward with the district football proposal to the next level of approval. 6-1 with Keel opposed. (FBCA, December 15, 2009)

The motion was changed from "to approve the district football proposal and to be implemented in 2011." And, the District Plan was dead before everyone returned to their homes that night. To say the District Plan was divisive to the WFCA and its membership was an understatement (FBCA, December 15, 2009).

Feeling the response from the football coaches, the staff reviewed the situation. As the district plan discussion came forward, the plan was determined to cause too

much travel for many of the small and medium rural schools, forced teams who did not qualify for the playoffs to play a ninth game, and the divisiveness in the Wisconsin football coaches who felt the current system was fine.

At the Sports Advisory Committee meeting on January 11, 2010, the staff reviewed the WFCAs survey results: 152 respondents out of 428 schools replied and 55 percent were in favor and 45 percent were opposed (SAC, January 11, 2010).

Concerns listed were: travel, lower level concerns, implementation in 2010 was too quick, most districts reported 50/50 split, like the school groupings on enrollment, loss of revenue, traditional rivals lost, most schools voted on how it affected them or there was a split between coach/administration, need to get rid of three games in ten days, conferences that have it good don't want it, football would be different than the rest of the sports, taking the regular season from the schools and giving control to the WIAA staff, easier instead of working harder (SAC, January 11, 2010). The plan was defeated at the SAC by an 11-2 vote (SAC, January 11, 2010).

The Advisory Council (AC) voted 0-17 to support the District Plan. The plan went to the BOC on January 27, 2010 (BOC, January 27, 2010). It was eventually dropped due to a lack of overwhelming support for such a state-wide change. Whether it was the timing or the speed of the process, there was no apparent backing. As the district plan was put to the side by action of the (BOC) in January of 2010, the elimination of the three games in ten days became a topic of discussion. Two other solutions brought forward were football-only realignment and removal of the overall win/loss percentage to allow teams to play better schools without affecting their placement in the tournament (BOC, January 27, 2010).

An opportunity to remove the problematic three games in ten days from the tournament schedule came to the forefront (BOC, January 27, 2010). By a unanimous vote, the BOC directed the Executive Staff to develop a plan to eliminate the three games in ten days for 2011 implementation (BOC, January 27, 2010). The author believes the elimination of three games in ten days is the best thing to happen to the sport of football in Wisconsin since the beginning of the WIAA State Football Tournament. By eliminating the three games in ten days, our membership was forced into a situation where the start date and/or the end date of the football season needed to be moved.

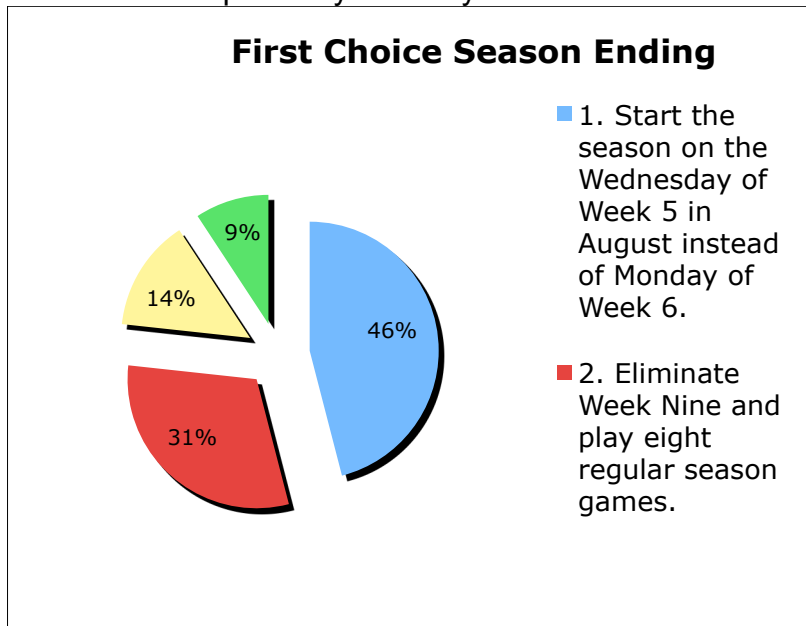
A survey was conducted by the Executive Staff to determine how the membership wanted to address the schedule changes with one football game per week. 335 member schools responded to the survey (See Figure 1).

(The survey originally had five options, but the WIAA Sports Medical Advisory Committee (SMAC) determined that the season regulation requiring 14 scheduled practices before the first game should be left intact and the option to remove the scrimmage was eliminated. The 81 schools who voted for that option were resurveyed and their responses were applied to the four options now available.)

The results of the survey were:

1. Start the season on the Wednesday of Week 5 in August instead of Monday of Week 6. – 154
2. Eliminate Week Nine and play eight regular season games. – 103
3. Move the WIAA State Tournament one week later. 47
4. Reduce the play-off field to 112 teams. 31

Figure 1 – Membership Survey for Early Start



Upon review of the results, the Executive Staff recommended to the BOC at the June 24, 2010, meeting that the early start with a nine game season be implemented in the fall of 2011. “The Sports Advisory Committee (SAC) supported option 1 as they felt if we would reduce games to eight, the ninth game would never come back. The Advisory Council (AC) supported option two because they were concerned about starting the season early and political ramifications. The Coaches Association leadership did not want to start earlier.” (BOC, June 24, 2010). After much discussion, the motion was made to adopt option one with the caveat to look at moving the ending date of coaching contact and a review of unrestricted contact window.” (BOC, June 24, 2010). The motion carried 6-4.

The response from the WFCA, which met in July, 2010, at the WFCA Football All-Star game in Oshkosh, was swift. The coaches agreed that the three games in ten days was not a good situation, but were concerned about the early start date. A proposal to have eight games plus one was forwarded by the WFCA and the BOC did

not believe the Executive Staff should schedule a ninth game for schools which did not qualify for the playoffs (BOC, August, 6, 2010). Once again at the BOC meeting, the discussion focused on forcing teams to play a game they did not want to play. In addition, a dead period was discussed and Ted Evans stated that the schedule should be set for 2011 (BOC, August 6, 2010).

During September of 2010, the WFCA conducted a survey and had 22 of 432 respondents who favored the early start and 322/432 who favored the eight plus one option (BOC, September 10, 2010), and 88 of the 432 who did not respond to the survey. Dean Sanders stated “the Association does not want to guarantee the ninth game or require teams to play once the regular season is over.” (BOC, September 10, 2010, p. 2)

Concern was raised that the football grid items have been advanced out of the scheduled Football Coaches Advisory meetings and the committee process not being followed when the coaches wanted changes immediately (BOC, September 10, 2010). The “eight games plus a guaranteed ninth game” was placed on the October BOC agenda and on the Area meetings agenda.

The BOC met on October 15, 2010, and football was again discussed. The football coaches proposal of eight games plus a guaranteed ninth game was discussed and defeated (BOC, October 15, 2010). Some discussion was held that the BOC made a decision and it should not be a topic of discussion any longer. The BOC voted to deny the eight plus a guaranteed ninth game unanimously. A vote to go with eight plus an optional ninth game did not pass with a 4-6 vote with the reasoning being the

optional games was not brought forward by the football coaches(BOC, October 14, 2010).

On December 7, 2010, the Football Coaches Advisory Committee (FBCA) met and reviewed the season regulations for the sport. Coaches asked that ninth graders be allowed to start the fall season on the same date as the varsity (FBCA, December 7, 2010). The committee then addressed the early start in 2012. Topic of the eight plus the optional ninth game rose. The coaches did not want to give up a game, but the Executive staff did not believe it could require a ninth game. Discussion included moving the championship to after the Thanksgiving holiday. Proposals to move the tournament back passed and to have the eight games plus optional one for the 2012 season only passed. Both unanimously (FBCA, December 7, 2010).

At the January 26, 2011, BOC meeting, the ninth grade FBCA proposal was approved, but the Thanksgiving and eight games plus an optional ninth were both asked to be tabled (BOC, January 26, 2011). Jack Klebsadel asked to have an ad hoc committee formed, representing the various members of the WIAA standing committees, to look into the matter. Various topics were discussed, but ultimately the BOC voted to deny the Thanksgiving holiday recommendation unanimously (BOC, January 26, 2011).

The recommendation to use an eight game season plus an optional plus one game was discussed and since the season already allows a ninth and tenth game, the optional plus one was removed by an amendment (BOC, January 26, 2011). In addition, the ad hoc committee was to be formed and to meet with recommendations ready for the June meeting (BOC, January 26, 2011).

The Ad Hoc Committee

The committee members of the WIAA Football Ad Hoc committee (ad hoc) were selected from the WFCAs (John Hoch, Tom Swittel, Tony Biolo, Al Minneart), SAC (Corey Golla, Brian Smith, Tim Collins), AC (Scott Winch, Brian Henning, Eric Burling), BOC (Jim Smasal, Mark Gobler, Jack Klebesadel), and Executive Staff (Wade Labecki, Todd Clark, Deb Hauser). The objective for the committee as outlined on the agenda stated: “to find the most palatable outcomes which is good for the kids, football and the Association. Is change necessary?” (Ad Hoc, February 16, 2011).

A survey was conducted to determine the general feelings of the membership and their football coaches by the WIAA Staff (Appendix H). When asked about the nine game season, the response of 316 head coaches was one-third for the early start and two-thirds for the late start (See Table 1).

Table 1 – Coaches nine game response

Early Start (9 games)	106	33.54%
Late Start (8 games)	195	61.71%
No Response	15	4.75%

Interestingly, forty percent of the coaches did not want a dead period before the season was to begin (See Table 2). 57 percent of the coaches did want a dead period. The WIAA membership passed a dead period at the 2011 Annual meeting which stated the calendar week before a fall season must have no school or coach contact for fall sports.

Table 2 - Should there be a period of no contact before the first practice?

Yes	181	57.28%
No	127	40.19%
No Response	8	2.53%

First Ad Hoc Meeting

Initially, the discussion was general in nature, beginning with the purpose of the ad hoc committee being formed to allow all stakeholders to have initial input on the football season discussion (Ad Hoc, February 16, 2011). Reduced player football was discussed and a recommendation to establish eight-player football in the WIAA was recommended along with potential tournament play (Ad Hoc, February 16, 2011). In 1957, there were six six-player schools and 72 eight-player schools. In 1969, there were no six-player schools and only eight eight-player schools (Otte, 1997). Otte (1997) stated the schools were again interested in reduced-player football in 1983.

- A motion was made and seconded (Burling/Golla) to recommend that the 8-player option in football be available to schools with an enrollment of 200 or less based on a three year average from their third Friday in September enrollment count. Motion passed 13-0.
- A motion was made and seconded (Smasal/Gobler) to start an 8-player football jamboree in 2012 with a bracket type tournament implemented when the numbers warrant it. Motion passed 13-0.

Once the reduced player football discussion was completed, the conversation turned to the football tournament (Ad Hoc, February 16, 2011). A review of the playoff history was provided. On April 20, 1971, after fifty years of no football playoffs, five head coaches and an official met and through the committee process requested an investigation into a football tournament (Otte, 1997). The first playoff games were

played in four divisions in 1976. In 1980, the divisions were increased to five divisions which forced the BOC to put in the “compressed playoff schedule” or the three games in ten days. But the coaches and athletic directors did not want to give up the ninth game and they didn’t want to start their season as early as they could. Otte stated “the season opened the first full week in August. It was not until the second week that many schools, particularly in the southern part of the state, wanted to begin.” (Otte, 1997, p. 342).

Otte (1997) stated in 1983 because realignment was causing virtually unsolvable problems, the Executive Director, John Roberts went to area meetings suggesting football only conferences based on enrollment (p. 342). Travel concerns and moving of schools caused quite the stir and 85 percent of the schools did not want the plan (Otte, 1997). Otte (1997) also stated that in 1985, the Board of Control voted to eliminate 3 games in 10 in 1987. But the plan was scuttled when playoffs expanded in 1987.

And the main question to the ad hoc was proposed: “8 games or 9 games – how do we want to adjust beginning with 2013 and on?” The discussion went to bracketing, seeding, a tournament plan, and a divided membership (Ad Hoc, February 16, 2011). At that point, Labecki asked: “As we talk here, and now, we need to determine what is going to be an outcome we want. If you back it up two weeks it affects basketball, wrestling, and hockey. It’s not about deer hunting as much as it’s about your association (WIAA). So when we start backing up the tournament and when level four is on deer hunting it hurts us. Thanksgiving - taking away from family time. Big issue. We need to focus on whether you want an eight game regular season or a nine game regular season.” (Ad Hoc, February 16, 2011)

The parameters were discussed and Labecki asked “if Thanksgiving is off the table?” (Ad Hoc, February 16, 2011) Much discussion took place and several reasons were brought forward: the importance of the current revenue of football to support nonrevenue sports, the Thanksgiving holiday, intruding on the winter sport seasons, availability of Camp Randall, and summer contact days,

- A motion was made and seconded (Gobler/Golla) to have the playoff games end no later than the weekend before Thanksgiving. Motion passed 11-2

With the Thanksgiving holiday protected, the committee moved on to the future.

- A motion was made and seconded (Henning/Collins) that for 2013 and 2014 it will be a 9 game regular season and at the end of the 2012 season a review will take place and determination will be made for future years. Motion passed 11-2.

Discussion then turned to the playoff system. Brian Smith of the SAC states: “Smith – Three issues: geography, size of school and competitive balance.” (Ad Hoc, February 16, 2011) Labecki “challenged the coaches association to come forward with a plan. What do we want to do? We are not going to please everyone. Is what we have good enough?” (Ad Hoc, February 16, 2011)

John Hoch of the WFCA (Ad Hoc, February 16, 2011) stated: “The coaches association has come up with a variety of ideas. We never know what the parameters are. Coaches were all in favor of playing after Thanksgiving. No reason for us to draw up a plan if we don’t know the parameters. We talked last week we have a list, where can we go from here? We need to know the parameters before a ton of work is done. Where are the limitations?” Jim Smasal, BOC, commented: “We will need time to think about options and talk again. We all would like to see nine games if possible. The only parameter left open is when do we start the season. Scrimmage,

contact days, etc. Two things still out there - start of the season and who is going to qualify for playoffs. Labecki added, "This committee needs to think about all play. What do you think?" After discussion, a motion was presented:

- A motion was made and seconded (Golla/Klebesadel) directing the WIAA staff to put together an all play model, a hybrid plan, 8 plus one plan and any other plan there may be for review by the coaches association and bring through committee structure. After discussion, motion was rescinded. (Ad Hoc, February 16, 2011)

After discussion of linking summer contact with the first week of football (Ad Hoc, February 16, 2011), the ad hoc committee adjourned. The coaches would use their WFCAs Coaches Clinic to discuss a playoff plan in March of 2011 and return to the April 4, 2011, Ad Hoc committee meeting with the "Big Foot" plan.

The "Big Foot" Plan

At the WFCAs Football Coaches Clinic in Madison, many of the coaches reviewed playoff plans and they decided on the "Big Foot" plan. In summary, the plan would:

- reduce the season to 13 games;
- all schools would play seven conference (regular season games);
- all schools would be placed into district play consisting of 8 schools;
- compete for a district title by the winning teams;
- schools would be seeded;
- winning schools continue to advance with the potential of becoming state champions;
- schools which lost in district play would be matched up with other teams that lost in order to continue until all schools played ten games;

- district champions would play in a state quarterfinal, state semi-final, and possibly in a state championship;
- revenues from district play would be kept by the schools;
- first round district games to be played at the school which had the fewest home games during the regular season.

The coaches who attended the mini-session were happy with the plan and the four ad hoc members of the WFCAs were to present it to the entire WIAA Football Ad Hoc committee.

Second Ad Hoc Meeting

The second football ad hoc meeting took place on April 4, 2010 and the meeting began with a discussion of the early start. Currently the WIAA football season consists of fourteen games with nine regular season games and five levels of football. “Al Minnaert identified three options to consider in order to maintain 9 regular season games with fewer weeks. 1) District plan with consolation games; 2) FB-only conferences; 3) shortened conference schedules with a district tournament qualifier for playoffs” (Ad Hoc, April 4, 2011). Al Minnaert and Tony Biolo began a discussion about the “Big Foot” plan. Smasal brought the meeting back to discussing parameters and a motion was made:

- A motion was made by Tom Swittel, seconded by Jack Klebesadel, that the earliest day practice may begin is week 6 and current season language regarding number of practices required will be maintained. Motion carried 10-0. (Ad Hoc, April 4, 2011)

The discussion moved on to address the eight or nine game season (Ad Hoc, April 4, 2011). Since the three games in ten days was not on the table, the decision about the

five levels of playoffs and how the season would be scheduled took place.

Jack Klebesadel made a motion to preserve a 10-game season in some format. Motion carried 10-0. (Ad Hoc, April 4, 2011). "Focus of the discussion turned to organization of the season. Al Minnaert explained the model preferred by football coaches would start at week 8 with district play" (Ad Hoc, April 4, 2011).

Other plans were discussed. "Brian Smith proposed considering 8 games plus one. Todd Clark stated the current method isn't bad and generates considerable interest in the playoffs. There is concern for taking game 9 away from the schools" (Ad Hoc, April 4, 2011). "Wade questioned whether the committee wished to forward the 8-player option plus a jamboree to Sports Advisory. Also, does the committee still want the proposal advanced to evaluate beyond season 2014 following the 2012 season? It is unclear if the Big Foot/hybrid plan is being considered for 2013 and 2014. The motion from the previous meeting would need to be rescinded. Then decide what plan to advance from WFCA and FB advisory" (Ad Hoc, April 4, 2011).

- A motion was made and seconded (Gobler/Winch) to move forward with the previous motion to review 2013 and 2014 following the 2012 season. Motion passed 10-0" (Ad Hoc, April 4, 2011).

"If obstacles are overcome, WIAA will be on board. Historically there is no interest in all-play football. John Hoch felt the committee's goal should be to fix what's broken" (Ad Hoc, April 4, 2011).

- "A motion was made (Hoch/Smith) to have Jim Smasal provide a document to WADA identifying parameters that are set. The Ad Hoc proposal includes 7 conference games and 3 weeks of district play providing for up to 10 games. Revenue sharing details will need to be determined. Tony Biolo wished to add that within district play, adjacent groups would be paired to allow for more diversity in play. Discussion ensued regarding what to include in the summary. Motion carried 10-0" (Ad Hoc, April 4, 2011).

Interestingly, the basic reason for the demise of the original district plan offered by John Roberts in 1983 and the plan offered by the WIAA staff in 2009 was because of travel. Geography in the northern and northwestern parts of the State of Wisconsin hasn't changed since 1983, 2009, or now.

Ad Hoc Plan

Various plans were discussed at the April 4, 2011 Football Ad Hoc meeting. The Ad Hoc plan was to be discussed by the coaches with their school's administration at their respective schools. The plan called for the state championship games to be played on the traditional days before the Thanksgiving holiday. The regular season would be seven weeks followed by a three game district plan. The eighth game would be the first round of district play. Each group of eight would reduce to 4 winners who participate in WIAA playoffs. Schools not advancing may be allowed to decide whether or not to play week nine and ten games. The WIAA would work the championship bracket. Discussion revolved around whether the Association could force schools to play games nine and ten if they chose not to play. "Corey Golla does not understand why the committee is opposed if the FB coaches like the hybrid plan. Wade explained that other committees (Sports Advisory, Advisory Council, WIAA staff, BOC) need to feel comfortable with whatever plan is advanced. Jim Smasal stated if schools would be allowed to opt out after seven games, then it's not a ten game season" (Ad Hoc, April 4, 2011).

"Jack Klebesadel again asked what to do if teams with losing records don't want to continue to play. Wade felt WIAA couldn't force teams to play after week 8. Corey Golla thought this was an ethical issue, and schools need to play games

that are already scheduled. Wade stated WIAA could not support a plan that forces everyone to play. Scott Winch suggested clarification that schools can choose not to play week 8-9-10. Mark Gobler did not feel many schools would decide not to play. Give schools the option to trade opponents if pairings not favorable. He agreed ethics would obligate schools to remain in the bracket until the end. Jim Smasal felt this committee couldn't come up with perfect plan, suggested letting the coaches come up with a plan" (Ad Hoc, April 4, 2011).

The Ad Hoc committee was going to meet in May, but the Executive Staff did not believe there were any items for the agenda. At the Area Meetings in the fall, the eight or nine game season would be discussed. In addition, the Ad Hoc plan would be discussed. While members of the Ad Hoc committee did not want to discuss specific aspects of the plan for fear of coaches viewing through the scope of competitiveness rather than objectiveness, the staff felt the details should be made available when discussing the plan. The question would be: Do we need to change our football tournament to a plan where everyone enters the tournament? Some call it "all-play" and some don't want it to be labeled as such.

A survey of the WIAA membership on whether the schools had a desire to continue exploring the Ad Hoc plan had a response of 101 no votes and 201 yes votes. Again, 126 schools did not respond.

Area Meetings

When the question about the nine game season was posed to the membership at the seven area meetings, the numbers would indicate through a show of hands that the majority would be for eight games (Appendix E). With respect to the football tournament, the majority would keep the current tournament plan. The 2012 season is

slated to be an eight game season and schools should have the opportunity to experience a football season with eight games only.

Football will be the only sport which has lost games during a season. Other sports have increased the number of contests allowed during a season.

History of the Early Start

In a review of the football season and the start dates, Deb Hauser reviewed the WIAA Yearbooks. After a review of the start dates, Hauser located several years where the season began with equipment handout taking place the first week of August (1984 and 1988-1990) (See Table 3).

The 2011 football season began on August 3. The 2012 season was scheduled to begin on August 1, but at the request of the Wisconsin Football Coaches Association and the Football Coaches Advisory Committee, the season was reduced to eight games and the start date was moved to August 6, 2012.

Table 3 – Football start date history

Year	Start Practice	Equipment Handout
1984	August 7	August 2
1985	August 12	August 8
1986	August 11	August 7
1987	August 10	August 6
1988	August 8	August 4
1989	August 7	August 3
1990	August 6	August 2
1991	August 14	Equipment hand out provision was removed

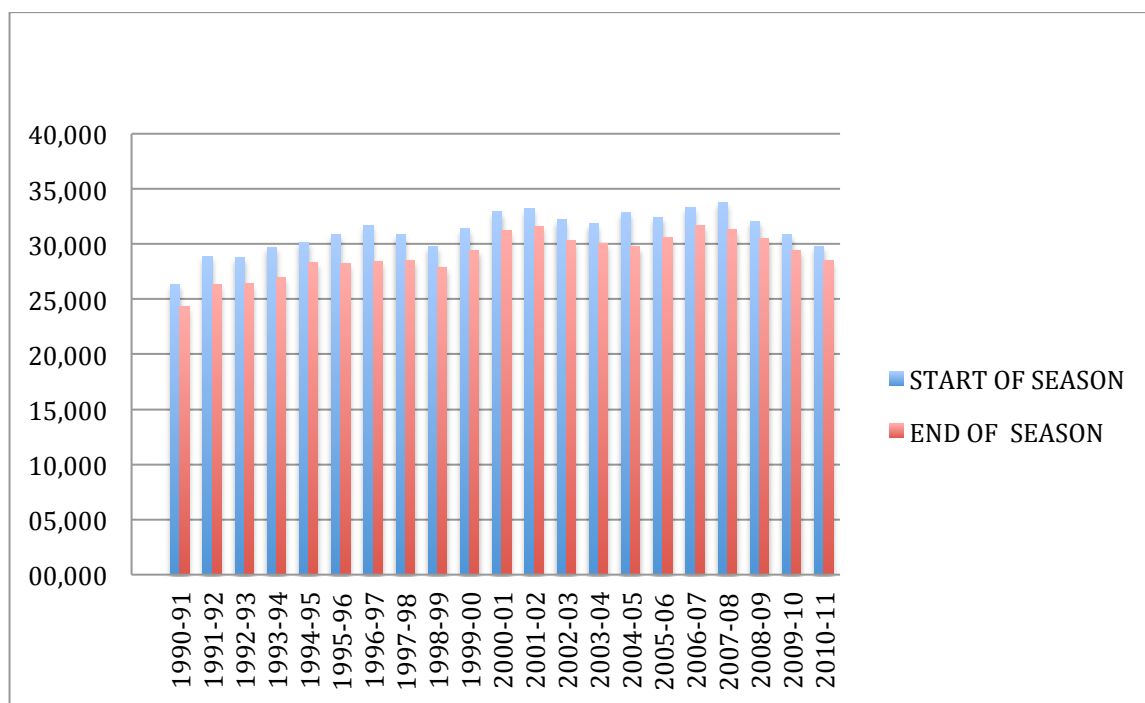
There is a history of starting early with equipment handout. The NFHS calendar rotation can make the season appear to be starting earlier than normal. But this is just a cycle the calendar provides as dates rotate and leap years appear.

The Wisconsin State Legislature passed Wisconsin Act 16 in 2001 which “requires school boards to start a school term after September 1 unless a school board submits a request to the Department of Public Instruction stating the reasons it would like the school term to start earlier. The department may grant a request only if it determines there are extraordinary reasons for granting it” (Department of Public Instruction, 2001).

Participation numbers

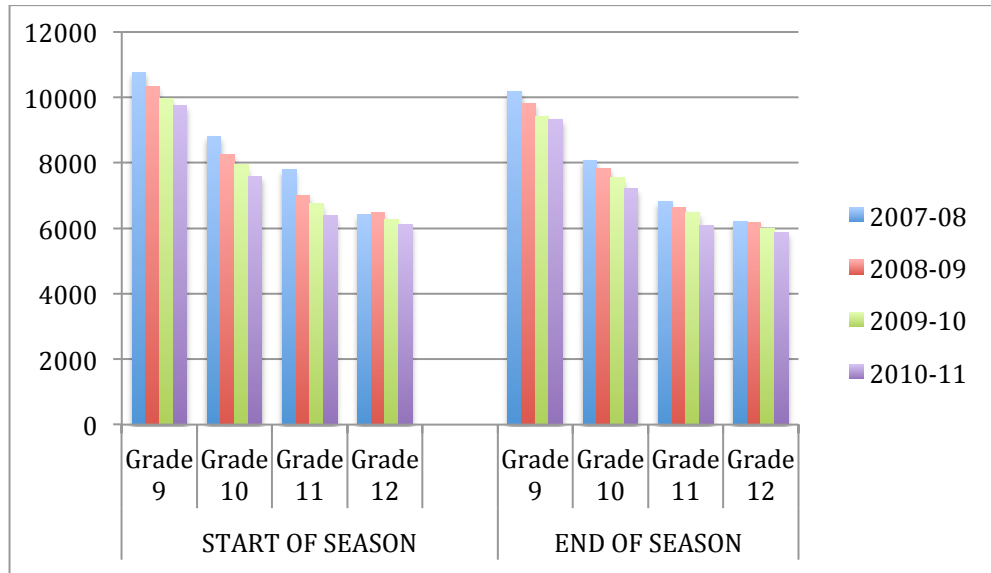
A concern expressed about the early start is the effect it will have on participation numbers. While numbers (See Figure 2) are greater for the number of athletes going out for football in 2010-11 (29,807) than in 1990 (26,361), the numbers now include non-public schools who joined the WIAA in 2000-01 (23,907). The football participation numbers at the beginning of the school year peaked in 2007-08 with 33,792 participants (See Appendix C).

Figure 2 – Football participation numbers



The participation numbers are a snap shot of the participation and cannot be used to speculate or predict conclusions in this review. WIAA participation shows increased participation over time in all sports, but the numbers are cyclical.

Figure 3 – Football participation numbers – by grade



The number of freshmen has also been in a decline (Figure 3). In 2007-08, 10,746 athletes went out for football. In 2010-11, the number had decreased to 9,752. The number of athletes who quit during the year as freshmen was around 500 (See Appendix D).

It will be difficult to determine whether athletes have decided not to go out for football because of the early start or because of other factors. Is there another reason which may be contributing to the lower levels of participation during the last five years?

All-Play

In the various discussions, whether Area Meetings or Ad Hoc, many did not believe the Ad Hoc plan was all-play. But since every team is in the tournament and can advance to the championship, a review of the past several years was in order.

In the WIAA tournament, schools are placed according to conference finish in seeds one to four. Since the inception of the football tournament, the football advisory

has continued to be adamant about preserving relevance to conference play. Once the seeds of one to four have been determined, the level one pairings are determined by placing the closest non-conference teams to the seeds in order. Therefore, the tournament is not a true seeded tournament.

Todd Clark reviewed the football playoffs from 2008-11. In his review, Clark found:

Four-year record of .500 teams in Level One was 13-71 or .155

Total score in the losses was 2815-727

Average score in the losses was 33.5 to 8.66

In 2011, record of .500 teams in Level One was 3-26

In 2011, total score in losses was 1160-256

In 2011, average score in the losses was 40 to 8.83

Data from 2010 and 2011 football tournament at Level One scores was gathered.

During the 2010 football tournament at Level One (see Table 4), the number one seed won 27 of the 28 games, the number two seed won 18 of the 28 games, the number three seed won 23 of the 28 games, and the number four seed won 16 of the 28 games. There were no forfeits.

Table 4 - 2010 wins by Seeds

Seed	(1) Win	(2) Win	(3) Win	(4) Win	(5) Win	(6) Win	(7) Win	(8) Win
Wins	27	18	23	16	12	5	10	1

The score differential (See Table 5) was 27.4 points between the number one and eight seeds. The differential decreased as the seeds matched teams in lower pairings. The point differential was 28.5 points between the number one seed and their

opponent with the largest win being 62 points in the number one seed versus their first round opponent. The score differential in games between lower seeded teams was 52, 45, and 44 points (Appendix F). (Note: A true eight seed will not likely have a .500 conference record in the first round with all-play. A true seed will be much lower in winning percentage.)

Table 5 - 2010 Wisconsin first round football scores

	(8) vs (1)	(7) vs (2)	(6) vs (3)	(5) vs (4)
Average Score Differential	27.4	21.6	23.0	18.0
Median	28.5	21	22	14.5
High Score Differential	62	52	45	44
Low Score Differential	1	1	1	1

During the 2011 football tournament at Level One (see Table 6), the number one and two seeds won 24 of the 28 games while the number three seed won 21 of 28 games and the number 4 seed won 16 of the 28 games. There were no forfeits.

Table 6 – 2011 wins by seeds

Seed	(1) Win	(2) Win	(3) Win	(4) Win	(5) Win	(6) Win	(7) Win	(8) Win
Wins	24	24	21	16	12	7	4	4

The score differential (See Table 7) was 26.9 points between the number one and their opponents. 24.5 points separated the number two and their opponents. 21.3 points was the differences between the number three and their opponents. The difference between the number four and their opponents was 22.7. The largest margin of win by a number one seed was 64 points and by a number two seed was 55 points. In the number three seed games, the largest score difference was 47. In the four seed games, the largest score difference was 53 points. (Appendix G)

Table 7- 2011 Wisconsin first round football scores

	(8) vs (1)	(7) vs (2)	(6) vs (3)	(5) vs (4)
Average Score Differential	26.9	24.5	21.3	22.7
Median	27	24	19.5	21
High Score Differential	64	55	47	53
Low Score Differential	1	2	1	5

After contacting Kevin Merkle of the Minnesota State High School League, he replied on September 26, 2011, in an email request:

“... there was a survey conducted by our FB Coaches Association about four years ago. The survey was much broader than just this question, but at that time about 60% of the coaches felt that not everyone should make the playoffs. However, the leadership of the Association and the FB Task force that met for the last year and a half and they were against this change. At this time we are not considering any changes to the current format. I didn't help you much, did I -- Kevin”

When researching for my dissertation, I found that very few states have a system of play where all teams qualify (See Appendix A and table 8):

Table 8 - Question – Do all high schools qualify for the football tournament

	Football			
	National		Wisconsin & Neighboring States	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Responses	3 ^a	37	1 ^b	5

Note. a = Indiana, Kansas, Pennsylvania responded yes. b =Indiana responded yes. (Labecki, 2010, p. 99)

Minnesota is not one of the three state associations that has an all-play football tournament, but 384 schools of the nearly 410 school do qualify. The scores in the first round have varied (Table 9). During the 2010 Minnesota State High School League (MSHSL) football tournament, the number eight seed did not beat the number one seed,

one number seven seed beat a number two seed, four number six seeds beat number three seeds, and 16 number five seeds beat number four seeds (Appendix B). The scores in the first round of the 2010 Minnesota tournament included two forfeits (See Table 9).

Table 9 – Minnesota wins by seeds

Seed	(1) Win	(2) Win	(3) Win	(4) Win	(5) Win	(6) Win	(7) Win	(8) Win	Forfeit (8) vs (1)
Wins	27	41	40	32	16	4	1	0	2

The score differential of the seeded teams did decrease as the seeds were lower in the 2010 Minnesota tournament (see Table 10). Seventy points was the largest point differential between a number one seed and a number eight seed (see Table 10). Sixty-four was the largest point differential between a number two seed and a number seven seed (see Table 7).

Table 10 - 2010 Minnesota first round football scores

	(8) vs (1)	(7) vs (2)	(6) vs (3)	(5) vs (4)
Average Score Differential	34.1	29.0	22.8	19.6
Median	32	28	24	15
High Score Differential	70	64	52	56
Low Score Differential	6	3	1	1

Conclusion

As our Association tries to determine what is best for the sport of football in Wisconsin and what is best for the high school athlete who participates in football in Wisconsin, we have to consider many factors.

The Effect of Seeding and All-Play

When looking at the data, scores in the Level One football games have significant differences which is especially true in number one seeded teams versus true number eight seeded teams. It is important to remember that the WIAA tournament is not a true seeded tournament. Comparing the score differentials with Minnesota scores (See Table 10), seeded differentials are greater. In an all-play format, teams would be seeded by the coaches and the score differential would only be greater if comparable to Minnesota where the score differential was a touchdown greater.

The Wishes of the Schools or of the Coaches

Are we going to lose athletes, money, or coaches? Even though the early starts in the past were in the first week of August, the football season was moved to no earlier than week 6 of the NFHS calendar. The Ad Hoc committee recommends that the football season start no earlier than the first full-week of August. Coaches have stated the coaching staffs are reduced since some non-staff coaches cannot take off of work another four days. Some schools do not wish to lose a gate by reducing the number of games. The combination of these factors does not lend itself to a solution which will satisfy everyone. When coming to a solution, it will come down to what is best for football.

The Best Football Tournament Plan

Golden (2004) stated: "It might be sacrilege to those who like the IHSA's all-inclusive tournament structure, but a football playoff system in which schools would

actually have to qualify would make the gridiron regular season even more exciting.

Golden went on to say:

"I've long believed in a playoff system, but it was affirmed during a two-year sojourn in Wisconsin. While there are several different ways other states determine what teams make the playoffs, Wisconsin essentially cuts the schools in half to determine its field. Much more emphasis is placed on conference races there as a winning conference record automatically qualifies a school for the playoffs. Whatever gap there is in the predetermined amount of schools is filled in by at-large teams in order of their overall records." (Golden, 2004)

It does not matter what the WIAA or WFCFA has proposed or examined, whether it be the district plan, the Ad Hoc plan, or the "Big Foot" plan, we did not come up with anything better than what we are currently doing. The Ad Hoc plan was a good idea and had merits, but it is not better than the current football tournament offered by the member schools of the WIAA.

Early Start or Late Start

The difference between the options, the lesser of the two evils, was to start late and play an eight game regular season schedule. However, after the experience of this year, it is apparent that we need to provide nine games to our high school football players. The discussion in the 1980's was to keep nine games. In the past two years, it has been to keep nine games. In the WFCFA survey (page 7), the coaches did not want to start early but did want to maintain nine games. However, when asked in a separate survey (See Table 1), the coaches would rather go to 8 games (62 percent) than start early (34%). My proposal:

Allow schools to elect to go to nine games. In 2012, the season is set with an eight game schedule plus optional two games after the playoff field is selected. Allow

schools to elect to play a game in the first week of August (zero week) with Board of Education approval. If the coaches and families in a district elect to start early why should the schools be held back?

Maintaining our current tournament structure is the right thing to do. If the wheel is not broken, we have nothing to fix with the tournament. If we wish to maintain nine games for all, then we need an early start. Personally, I do not believe that we should take games away from the kids.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Football Tournament Designs

State	Football Schools	Qualifiers	State	Football Schools	Number of Qualifiers
Illinois	551	256	Alabama	387	192
Indiana	318	318	Arizona	219	108
Wisconsin	428	224	Colorado	287	120
Michigan	655	256	Connecticut	143	32
Minnesota	392	384	Delaware	44	12
Iowa	356	192	Florida	652	No schools during first 2 years of existence or under sanctions.
			Hawaii	48	12
			Illinois	551	256
			Indiana	318	318
			Iowa	356	192
			Kansas	341	341
			Kentucky	220	192
			Louisiana	285	160
			Maine	74	44
			Maryland	187	64
			Massachusetts	327	71
			Michigan	655	256
			Minnesota	392	384
			Mississippi	245	96
			Montana	173	68
			Nebraska	294	160
			Nevada	89	40
			New Hampshire	56	24
			New Mexico	125	Depends on classification, 12 in largest 3 classes
			North Carolina	268	256
			North Dakota	104	56
			Ohio	715	192
			Oklahoma	350	160
			Oregon	242	112
			Pennsylvania	591	591
			Rhode Island	43	20
			South Carolina	198	128
			South Dakota	147	96
			Tennessee	339	190
			Utah	92	68
			Vermont	32	12
			Virginia	306	64
			West Virginia	124	48
			Wisconsin	428	224
			Wyoming	56	40

(Labecki, 2010, 208)

Appendix B - 2010 Minnesota Football Round One Scores