

Season Dates: How the Process Works Within the WIAA Membership

Last year, we brought forward the idea of football districts to the WFCB in July. A meeting with the leadership of the WFCB with Wade Labecki and Deb Hauser met to discuss the idea of redistricting the state for football only. Later, on July 17, Wade Labecki met with the WFCB Executive Board and the WFCB Board of Directors to explain the plan and the impact on football in Wisconsin.

On July 19, the football district plan was released on the WIAA web site to the public and the WFCB district representatives put the plan forward to the WFCB membership asking for input by the middle of August. On August 7, the Board of Control reviewed the Football District Plan and discussed the merits of the plan. In each football rules interpretation meeting and folder, the district plan was provided to football coaches. The WFCB provided an article in the Point After II as well. During the WIAA Area Meetings held around the state in September, the district plan was presented to the member schools of the WIAA for discussion. Feedback on the district plan was received and posted on the WIAA web site.

At the October 16 Board of Control meeting the Board discussed the implementation date of the plan and decided that the plan would be implemented in 2010 if approved at the January Board of Control meeting after winding its way through the WIAA committee process. The vote was 9-1 to use 2010 as the implementation date and to proceed with planning.

At the December Board of Control meeting on December 4, the Board determined that the 3 games in 10 days at the end of the season would be eliminated should the district plan not pass successfully through the membership.

The Football Coaches Advisory Committee convened on December 15. The original proposed agenda item, "To move forward with the current football district proposal to be implemented in 2010" was changed to "To move forward with the current district football proposal to the next level of approval." It passed 6-1. In addition, the FB Coaches Advisory committee requested the overall record be removed as a factor in playoff placement. After the news of the Coaches Advisory became available, the communications for implementation and against began. The vast majority were in favor of the plan (103 schools) compared to the opposed (54). Concerns were expressed on travel and budgets by small schools. The WFCB conducted a survey of the 428 football schools. With 152 surveys returned, 55% were in favor and 45% were not in favor.

On January 11, the Sports Advisory Committee met. The WIAA executive staff then recommended addressing football-only conference realignment, 3 games in 10 days (five alternative calendars were presented), and removing the overall record from the placement criteria. After much discussion, the Sports Advisory voted to deny the recommendation to move forward with the current football proposal by an 11-2 vote. The Advisory Council met in Stevens Point on January 26 and after much discussion voted to follow the Sports Advisory Committee vote with the three recommendations of the staff: FB only realignment, end 3 games in 10 days, and remove the overall record for placement in the football playoffs.

At the Board of Control meeting on January 27, 2010, the discussion revolved around the votes taken at the other committees as well as the options available. Input was provided by member schools present and a motion to deny the recommendation to move forward with the football proposal and to direct the staff to present alternatives carried 8-2. A motion to support football-only conference realignment passed unanimously (17-0 by Advisory Council); to remove 3 games in 10 days passed unanimously (17-0 by Advisory Council); and to find relief for schools requesting it by 2011 (16-1 by Advisory Council. (The overall record factor was removed from playoff placement.)

Discussion around the 3 games in 10 days began to rise with a survey which was presented to the membership. In that survey of 432 schools, a total of 288 responded. 98 schools chose to start early, 77 eliminating the scrimmage, 56 eliminating week nine, 36 moving state back, and 21 reducing the football playoff field to 112 schools.

After the Sports Medical Advisory Committee recommended maintaining the 14 days of acclimation before the first game, eliminating the scrimmage was no longer an option. Since the elimination of the scrimmage was removed, the survey was opened again and schools could revote or add their vote. The new total of football playing schools surveyed increased to 335 schools of 432. 154 voted to start early, 103 to eliminate week nine, 47 to move state back, and 31 to reduce the playoff field to 112 schools. The survey was closed Friday, June 11.

As the Sports Advisory Committee meeting approached, the WFCB leadership thought it better to allow the membership survey to speak for their members. On June 14, the Sports Advisory met and voted to support providing relief at the end of the football season whereby there will not be three games played within a 10-day time frame by starting the season on the Wednesday of Week 5 in August instead of Monday of Week 6. Much of the discussion focused on the sport of football retaining their nine-game season. (If an alternative comes forward for change, it can be brought through this very process.)

The motion passed 9-4. At the Advisory Council meeting on June 23, a motion to go 8 games passed 10-6. After much discussion at the Board of Control, the same motion passed 6-4. In the end, everyone was asked for input and offered the chance to do so at many levels. Keep in mind, schools could maintain the current start date on their own with an eight-game schedule. The ninth game would still be available (as the tenth game is available for a nine-game schedule).