

Sports

Catholic high school coaches see pros, cons to grid playoffs

By Richard A. Kiley

Catholic high-school football coaches met with mixed reactions a state committee's recent approval of regional football playoffs to begin next season.

The decision will most likely result in Western New York championship games between the Rochester, Buffalo or Syracuse areas a week after sectional finals.

Dick Cerone, the Section 5 and state football chairman, announced that the Executive Committee of the New York State Public High School Athletic Association approved an 11th game by an 11-10 vote during meetings in Albany last October. At present, no formal agreements exist between Section 5 and Section 6 (Buffalo area) or Section 3 (Syracuse).

The extra week of games can be used only for inter-sectional playoffs, leaving the decision on whether to participate to individual sections.

"I think it's great," said Aquinas football coach Chris Battaglia, whose Little Irish came within a game of the sectional finals this year. "It's great for the athletes in New York state. Chicago and the midwest states have (football playoffs), and so do some eastern states like New Jersey."

Battaglia added that the extra week of games — probably the first step in creating a state championship game even though additional games are not being considered — might not be so enthusiastically accepted by coaches in other high school sports, specifically basketball.

"I can see where (the extended season) is a problem. I think student athletes are going to have to make their minds up earlier as far as what sport they're going to play," Battaglia said. "Maybe it means they can't play 18 or 19 games in basketball . . . there are pros and cons to both sides."

It's those pros and cons that have other grid coaches wondering if adding an 11th game is a viable concept.

"Personally, I think the concept is nice. It just extends the year too long," said Nick Teta, whose Bishop Kearney team fell in the Class AA finals to Canandaigua this year. "We're beginning to drag seasons into other seasons already."

Teta said the extra game will also eliminate something in which multi-talented athletes have prided themselves.

"We're turning kids into specialized athletes," Teta said. "Kids should be able to participate in as many activities as possible."

McQuaid coach Tom Sprague, a tri-star athlete in high school and college, agrees with Teta.

"You're definitely seeing that basketball players aren't playing other sports," Sprague said. "A kid shouldn't have to miss out on playing three sports in high school or college. I

would hate to see that. It's hard to get a basketball player on the football team now."

Sprague added that he didn't want to see any tampering with leagues — especially the traditionally strong City-Catholic Division — by the addition of more games or less emphasis placed on winning league titles.

The McQuaid head coach admits that the temptation to see what team — and what section — represents the best in the state is mighty tempting though.

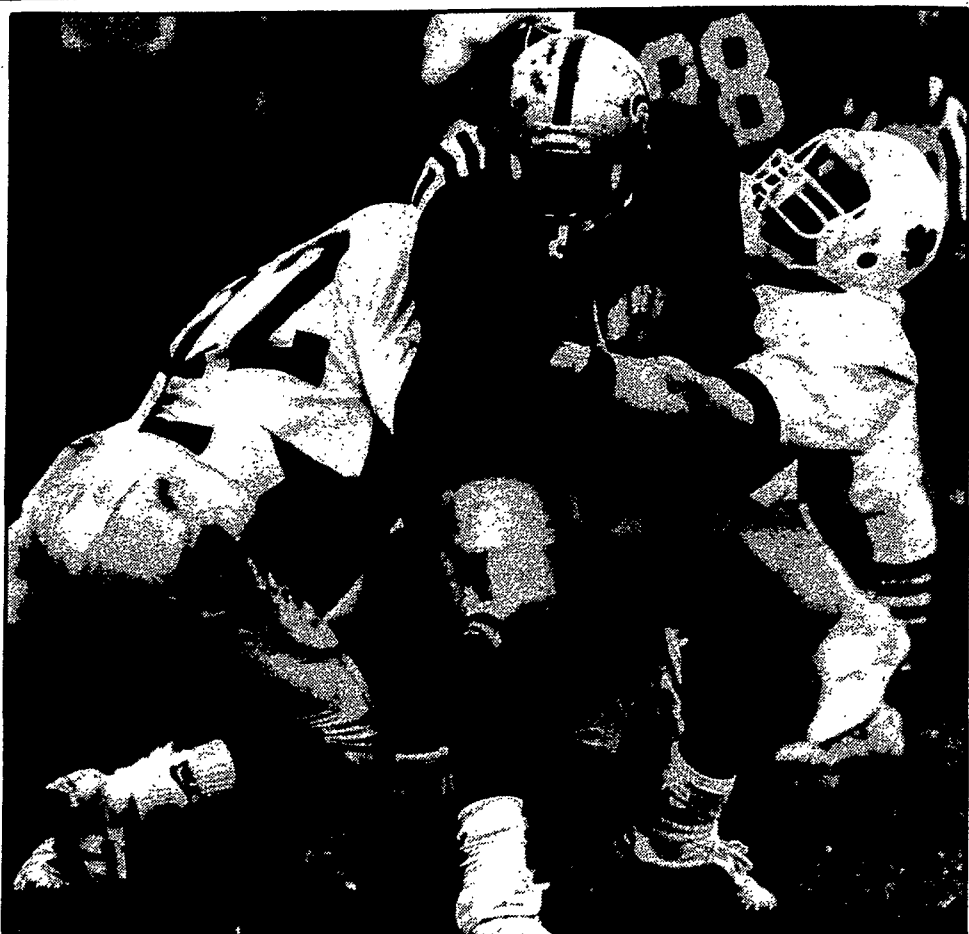
"A drawback (of not having state playoffs) is not seeing who's number one," Sprague said. "It's exciting to think about playing in Rich Stadium or the Carrier Dome. But you're going to have to start the season a week earlier."

Teta believes asking student-athletes to give up more of their summer might prove too demanding.

"We have to remember these kids are students first. How much are we going to ask of them before and after school?" Teta said. "When does it stop? At what point do we stop demanding that they just be athletes . . . (and) demand that they be specialized (athletes)? That's a point when it's gone too far."

Although Elmira Notre Dame football coach Mike D'Aloisio would welcome the possibility of inter-sectional play, he wonders whether certain interscholastic programs could thrive at smaller schools that rely on athletes to play more than one sport.

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Bonnie Trafelet/Courier-Journal

Catholic high-school football coaches offer arguments both for and against having regional grid playoffs.



High School League			
Northeast Division Holy Trinity 69, St. Ambrose 49 Lewis Street 80, Pinnacle Lutheran 62 Blessed Sacrament, Christ the King (*) St. Bridget, St. Margaret Mary (*)	Northwest Division Mother of Sorrow 63, Our Lady of Mercy 51 St. Lawrence 48, St. John (Greece) 44 St. Charles Borromeo, Sacred Heart (*) Most Precious Blood, Holy Cross (*)	Southeast Division Assumption 86, Resurrection 43 Good Shepherd 53, St. Louis 49 St. Thomas More 83, JCC 41 St. John (Humboldt) 55, Faith Lutheran 39 St. Joseph (Pen.) 64, St. John (Fpt.) 47	Southwest Division St. Monica 66, St. Theodore 60 Holy Ghost 56, Holy Family 38 St. Pius Tenth 73, St. Anne 60 St. John (Spem.) 53, Good Counsel 50
Junior High Boys' League			
Northwest Division St. Thomas the Apostle 51, St. Lawrence 39 Holy Cross, St. Charles Borromeo (*) St. Rita 64, Sacred Heart 44 Mother of Sorrows, Most Precious Blood (*) St. Anthony of Padua, St. John (Greece) (*)	Southwest Division Seton, St. John (Spem.) Blue (*) Charles House 49, Holy Rosary 26 Good Counsel, St. Pius Tenth (*) St. Anne/St. Boniface 60, St. Helen 33 St. Theodore, Holy Ghost (*)	Northeast Division St. Salome, St. Stanislaus (*) Lewis Street, Blessed Sacrament #2 (*) Holy Trinity 43, St. Joseph 18 St. Cecilia, St. Ambrose (*) St. John (Humboldt) 95, St. Margaret Mary 80	Southeast Division St. John (Fpt.) 88, Blessed Sacrament #1 85 Good Shepherd 76, St. Joseph (Pen.) 23 Pinnacle Lutheran, CYP (Mendon) (*) Oatka, St. Louis (*)
Junior High Girls' League			
East Division St. Rita, Blessed Sacrament (*) Seton 24, St. Joseph (Pen.) 22	West Division St. Louis 35, Lewis Street 9 Good Counsel, Christ the King (*)	St. Charles 43, St. Pius Tenth 29 Sacred Heart/Nazareth Hall 18, Holy Cross 16	West Division St. John (Spem.), St. Theodore (*) Mother of Sorrows, St. Ambrose (*)
5th and 6th Grade Boys' & Girls' League			
North Division St. Lawrence 34, St. Thomas the Apostle 19 Mother of Sorrows, St. John (Spem.) (*) St. Pius Tenth (A) 52, St. Helen (W) 12 St. Pius Tenth (B), St. Helen (B) (*) Holy Cross 33, St. Charles Borromeo 17 St. Margaret Mary (B) 42, Holy Ghost 22	West Division Nativity, St. Margaret Mary (*) Holy Family, St. John (Greece) (*) St. Theodore, St. Anne (*) St. Anthony of Padua, Holy Rosary (*) Good Counsel 30, Most Precious Blood 10	South Division Good Shepherd 65, St. John (Humboldt) (W) 27 Pinnacle Lutheran, St. Louis (*) St. John (Fpt.) (W), Bethlehem Lutheran (*)	Central Division St. Joseph, Christ the King (*) Holy Trinity, St. Ambrose (B) (*) St. John (Humboldt) (R) 47, St. Andrew 10 St. Salome, St. John (Fpt.) (R) (*) St. Rita 36, Lady of Lourdes 22

(*) No scores reported

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