

OBSERVING THE HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL SCHEDULING MEETING

SALINA, KANSAS

OCT. 5, 2011

This football schedule meeting process used to consist of numerous meetings throughout the state, now most of this can be done with the click of the mouse. The process also could take up to 3 or 4 weeks of calling, recalling, contacting the right schools, and etc. Now, all that took almost a month is now virtually done in an hour and half. It's the changing world that we live in and adaptation is a big part of it. The Kansas State High School Activities Association Representatives spoke a few words, thanking everyone being present and understand that they are the referee of the day, half of the room may love them and the other half may hate them. (Due to district assignments, classifications, etc)

There were three points the KSHSAA reps brought to the attention how they create the district assignments. First is what makes sense geographically, with the continuous change fluctuating throughout the state, numerous schools change their classification every so often from small changes to large changes. The next topic they touched base on was the ability to fit schedules. The main reason a lot of schools have league affiliations isn't just for rivalries, but the fact of working together to make schedules. There are many circumstances to where schools are which may make sense to play a Nebraska or Colorado school due to where they are located in the state. The other schools which help fill spots are approved schools, however most schools which do need a slot filled are western Kansas, where Approved Schools are located in the metro areas of Wichita or Kansas City, but to most people a game is better than none at all. Although, it was brought to the attention to KSHSAA member schools help member schools first and foremost.

Every two years Principals, Athletic Directors and Head football coaches of Kansas cram into the Salina Bicentennial Center so set up their desired schedule for the next two years. Every Kansas High School is represented for the meeting. Representatives from Hugoton, St. Francis, Girard, and Wathena can be found coming from each corner of the state and in between. First there will be standing around visiting with people maybe about how their season is going for coaches who may not get to see each other very often; maybe they're discussing what their future district may be. Then KSHSAA representative, by first announcing the Districts, then after that is where it gets chaotic. Once individuals pick up the district assignments take them back to each corner of the large room, then the fun begins.

The room is divided into four sections with overhead projectors: 6A-5A in one corner, 4A in the next corner, 3A-2-1A in another corner, then finally the 8-Man Divisions I and II. The 6A/5A schools are mostly sitting to where they don't have to find too many games due to being in urban areas, league schools, and just waiting on fill their three slots for district. This is very similar for the 4A schools corner, where there is some walking back and forth from the 3A/2-1A

corner. 4A and 3A schools are in a good situation to where a lot of schools can play each other due to being similar in size. The 3A/2-1A schools things can get very heated, but consists of being very aggressive, because nobody wants a hole in the schedule. On several occasions schools maybe open on the same playing date, but are extreme distances. This is where state membership schools come in handy. An example this year are Johnson-Stanton County and Sterling which sit about 235 miles apart. The best situation for these is to meet in the middle; Dodge City is approximately half way so a site in that area will most likely serve as the playing location for the two schools. Finally, the 8-man schools, there is approximately 100 schools between the two classifications, however large districts makes scheduling relatively easy, although some schools can still be left in the cold.

It's almost like a New York Stock Exchange building with fast foot work and shuffling around as schools hope to fill their schedule. An athletic director looks at his sheet, looks at the overhead to see whom is open that week then the race is on to find somebody with that school polo on. Some schools maybe looking for the ideal match up that many people want to see. Or maybe it's getting that county rival that all of the hometown people want to see. Then there is the ultimate worry of maybe having a hole in the schedule due to the lack of teams in your classification. There are the schools which have a schedule set up before evening looking at the schedule for the simple fact that they are set

In the past two years 8-man Schools had difficulty by find teams simply due to the fact if they would have a team. In 8-man Division I, with Quivira Heights and Claflin consolidating created Central Plains. Haviland made a schedule being a part of 8-man Division II, District 5, however later joining Greensburg making Kiowa County High School leaving a hole in the schedule for district teams. Pawnee Heights also in the same district, played one year, before having to join in a cooperative with Larned. Western Plains in a cooperative with Healy, has struggled due to lack of numbers, however look to have a good nucleus with playing a JV schedule this year with a few varsity games, getting confidence up and hoping to get back to Varsity football in 2012.

In the 2011 version of the meeting, there is a lot of certainty unlike two years ago, but a lot of shake up yet again. Maize South was the new school two years joining the Ark Valley-Chisholm Trail League, well another new school is joining the AVCTL as well, this one Goddard-Eisenhower, which is classified as 5A. Gardner Edgerton and Hutchinson both jumped back into 6A, after being down a class for two years. There were a few surprises with the classifications coming up a few weeks ago, McPherson the long time 5A power has found them in the top of the 4A, which makes several smaller 4A schools cringe. There are a few schools finding themselves in a new position as well. Moundridge whom hasn't been a 3A in a long time if ever, will jumping up in classification from 2-1A. A couple others are tradition rich Pittsburg-St. Mary's Colgan which will be interesting to see how the Panthers cope with being 3A. Salina-Sacred Heart another school which has been 2-1A for several years found an increase enrollment as well. Uniontown was a 3A in the last classification list, now find themselves down two whole

classes to 8-Man Division I. Satanta 2-1A whom was already playing a couple 8-man teams of Moscow and Ingalls, will be able to play the entire schedule that way now as they join Uniontown.

Some major jumps which come to a surprise is Atwood-Rawlins County former 2-1A power winning three state titles from 1989 to 1991, is making the change like several schools in the Northwest corner of the State due to declining enrollment. An example which comes to mind is Mid-Continent Schools which Hill City and Osborne both moving to 8-man but finding very good success. It's the way it is unfortunately, a term which I've heard about rural areas dying is the called the "brain drain." This talks about how kids from rural areas go to college and can't move back to their community for the fact of there aren't too many jobs available for a college degree unless it's in teaching, farming, banking or insurance. It's not only that, but young people come very comfortable with the urban style of living with options of dinning, shopping, and being able to short commutes.

As the day wraps up, there are several people walk away upset, maybe because of the schedule or their district assignment, others may walk away thrilled with theirs. Emotions can tend to flare up occasionally due to frustration, but usually works out in the end. There is one thing to take into consideration when looking at district assignments, a lot of where teams land is pure luck to an extent, there is no rhyme or reason for most classifications. The larger schools which are in the western half of the state usually have a good idea who maybe in their district. The other point to look at is that the game still has to be played and sometimes anything can happen in high school football!

Didn't get a chance to hear many schedules so anyone who does feel free to acknowledge them:

KEY MATCH UPS TO LOOK FORWARD TO:

Hays High vs. McPherson

Salina South vs. St. Thomas Aquinas (Overland Park)

Blue Valley (Stillwell) vs. Salina Central

LaCrosse vs. Hoisington

8-MAN

Baileyville B&B vs. Pretty Prairie