

Cedar Valley Christian adds 8-man football

Written by Jim Ecker

Wednesday, 23 March 2011 14:37 - Last Updated Wednesday, 23 March 2011 14:56

There will be a new high school football program in Cedar Rapids for the 2011 season.

Cedar Valley Christian School has decided to create an eight-man football program and has begun scheduling games, the school's athletic director said Wednesday. The season opener is scheduled for Aug. 19 at West Central.

Cedar Valley Christian, located at 3636 Cottage Grove Ave. SE, has joined the Iowa High School Athletic Association (IHSAA) and the Iowa Girls High School Athletic Union (IGHSAU) for the 2011-12 school year and has been looking to add sports.

Ed Betsworth, the athletic director at LaSalle Middle School in Cedar Rapids, will be the head coach of the Cedar Valley Christian football team.

"He has raised a large amount of money to support football at Cedar Valley," said Stephanie Hodge, the school's athletic director. "We have enough to get us going - buying uniforms and equipment - and we're working on sharing a field."

She said Betsworth has two children who attend Cedar Valley Christian, a daughter in high school and a son in the seventh grade.

Hodge has scheduled varsity games with West Central, Dunkerton, Midland and Central City and is looking to add others. All of Cedar Valley's games in 2011 will be on the road, she said.

There were 65 schools in Iowa with eight-man football programs in 2011. All of those schools consider themselves too small to field regular 11-man teams. There were 32 teams in the IHSAA eight-man playoffs.

West Central, Dunkerton, Midland and Central City are in District 4 for eight-man football along

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with Preston, Lansing Kee, East Central, Springville and Olin. "Schools have been very enthusiastic to include us on their schedule," said Hodge.

Hodge said 20 boys attended a meeting for eight-man football at the school. Twelve of them have been fitted for equipment, she said, and the team will have spring conditioning. Hodge said there are about 80 students at the school, roughly half boys and half girls.

Cedar Valley Christian already offers boys basketball, girls basketball, girls volleyball and coed soccer. The school has been looking to expand its athletic department, but Hodge acknowledged football came as a surprise, mostly due to the expense involved.

"I was skeptical at first, but we've had meetings and the coach is very organized and has contacts," she said. "The students are very enthusiastic and so are the parents, so I'm looking forward to it.

"There's talk of other sports now," said Hodge. "If we're doing football and soccer and basketball and volleyball, why not do the easier sports, like cross country or golf? Those have been thrown out there, but it has not been taken to the school board."

Cedar Valley Christian has been playing coed soccer in the fall, but will switch to a spring schedule for the 2011-12 school year. Hodge is not sure if the school will stick with coed soccer, or switch to separate teams for boys and girls.