

Kibby has proposal to help save the Valley

Written by Jim Ecker

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(Editor's Note: The Metro Sports Report is trying to help save the Mississippi Valley Conference as a football league and stop a move toward Class 4A districts. This is the latest in a series of articles.)



Scott Kibby has a suggestion to help save the Mississippi Valley Conference as a football league, but he's reluctant to stand on a soap box and shout about it.

He thinks the suggestion could help solve a few problems and stop the rush toward Class 4A district football, but he doesn't want the folks at the Iowa High School Athletic Association to get the wrong idea.

"I'm really not trying to leverage the state at all," said Kibby, the activities director at Cedar Rapids Jefferson. "I'm just trying to see if there's some momentum to save the conference."

The Board of Directors of the IHSAA will meet Oct. 13 in Boone to discuss the proposal for Class 4A district football, which appears to have support in other parts of the state. The board will not vote on the proposal Oct. 13, but it could vote as soon as November or December to implement 4A districts for 2012.

If the IHSAA votes in favor of Class 4A district football, it would kill the Mississippi Valley Conference as a football league. Kibby would hate to see that happen. That's why he's trying to find a solution.

"It's one thing to complain or be frustrated or whatever, but if you can be part of the solution, that's a lot better than just being frustrated," he said. "So I just wanted to see if I could do it, if I could solve some of those problems."

"I think it can be done, if it's wanted to be done," he said. "I don't know if it's wanted to be done. I think that's honest."

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There are four Class 4A football leagues in the state with the Mississippi Valley Conference, the Mississippi Athletic Conference, the CIML and the Missouri River Conference. Some of those leagues have problems with schedules, travel expenses, budgets and levels of competition.

A few of the smaller 4A football schools would like to play 3A football, but their leagues do not allow it. Xavier High School might fall into that category, along with Dubuque Wahlert, Davenport Assumption and North Scott.

Kibby tried to devise a plan that would preserve the leagues and allow for flexible schedules, all the while keeping an eye on gate receipts and the bottom line. He sent his proposal to all the athletic directors in the Valley, seeking input and wondering if the league might coalesce around a proposal that could be carried to the IHSAA for consideration.

Kibby's plan is a compromise, combining elements of conference football and district football without killing the leagues. "I think it CAN BE DONE," he wrote his peers, adding the capital letters himself.

Kibby offers a few options, but basically it comes down to this:

- 1) Xavier and Wahlert are excused from playing football in the Valley, but would remain in the league for all other sports.
- 2) The remaining 12 teams in the MVC would be split into two six-team divisions.
- 3) Each team would play all five of its division opponents, leaving four other regular-season games that could be played against teams from the other MVC division or other leagues.

Kibby expounded upon his idea during an interview with the Metro Sports Report, suggesting

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how teams could play a flexible schedule while still earning points toward the playoffs.

In a nutshell, he suggested the following:

1) The first two games of the season would not count toward the playoffs, so each team could play whoever it wanted during Weeks 1 and 2. Kennedy could play 3A Xavier, Linn-Mar could play 3A Marion, or Prairie could play 3A Solon without harming their playoff chances. No playoff points would be awarded, so no playoff points would be sacrificed by playing a team from a lower class.

2) The next seven games would count toward the playoffs. Five of those games in the Mississippi Valley Conference would be division games, and the other two games could be against teams from the other division or other leagues. Jefferson could play Burlington, or Washington could play Pleasant Valley.

Kibby thinks a similar formula could work in the Mississippi Athletic Conference, the CIML and the Missouri River leagues. He thinks it's essential that conference officials from the other leagues lend their support to his idea for it to work.

"If the MVC is the Lone Ranger, we're going to be out of luck," he remarked.

Kibby thinks there's momentum in the MVC toward adopting a proposal for the IHSAA, and he thinks it would be a good idea for an MVC official to attend the board meeting Oct. 13 and make a presentation.

"We're going to have to get our ducks in a row. I'm not going to beat a dead horse, either," he said, mixing metaphors.

The IHSAA uses a point system to determine playoff qualifiers for all classes, including 4A, so Kibby thinks it's important to incorporate the points system into his plan. "I think they're pretty

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married to their point system," he said.

Why the rush? Because the clock is ticking, and ticking rapidly.

The IHSAA uses a two-year cycle to review and possibly revise district football for all classes, and the 2011 campaign is the second year of that cycle. That means a new cycle will start in 2012, or not again until 2014.

"The hurry is on their end, because if they're going to do district football they've got to get moving," Kibby noted.

There appears to be little support for Class 4A district football in the Mississippi Valley Conference. Kibby and the athletic directors at Kennedy, Washington, Linn-Mar and Prairie all voted "no" when they returned their surveys.

"I think the impetus is all from Central Iowa," Kibby said. "And I think they have been talking about it for quite awhile."

Kibby is afraid Class 4A district football would adversely affect revenues, because it could alter the number of attractive home games each year. Jefferson, Kennedy and Linn-Mar were placed in the same district in the state's sample proposal, but Washington and Prairie were placed in another district.

If district football is implemented, there's no guarantee the Metro schools would be able to play each other as often as they want. Each school can make requests, but the schedules would be determined by the state, not the schools or conference.

Kibby is worried about that, because he needs gate receipts to run his department. "It's troubling if somebody is going to take away some of your revenue," he said.

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The Cedar Rapids Community school district pays for coaches and transportation but nothing else, according to Kibby.

"I buy the helmets, I buy the should pads. I do all those expenses," he said. "I can't afford for my revenue to go down. It's too tight. You're playing with my livelihood.

"People want to hold onto their money as much as possible. So do I," he said. "I'm a small businessman here, trying to hold onto my money."