

## A peek into the football future

Written by Scott Unash

Tuesday, 02 October 2012 20:52 - Last Updated Tuesday, 02 October 2012 21:07

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Hard to believe, but we are two-thirds of the way through the 2012 high school football season. I usually hold off until this point of the season before peering into the foggy crystal ball that is prognosticating for the football postseason.

The reason is simple. By the sixth week of the season you have a pretty good hold on what each team possesses and what the final three weeks should bring.

That's the way it usually works.

This season has been a tough one to figure, especially in Class 4A. Oh yes, you have your top tier of teams - Iowa City West, Cedar Falls and Xavier from the MVC, and Pleasant Valley and Muscatine from the MAC.

But after that it is tough to figure where the next group of teams rank. The same goes for the central and western part of the state. Ankeny is unbeaten and seems like the top dog while the two West Des Moines schools - Dowling and Valley - along with many of the usual postseason veterans all have two losses.

Very tough to figure things on that side of the state as well.

As far as the eastern half is concerned, and remember the schools of the MVC and MAC still use the old time tested point system to determine playoff seeds, the same rules as always apply. Five wins will qualify a team for the postseason, while four most likely will get you in to the "dance."

Here's how I see things shaking down.

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Xavier is in, of course, and I believe has a chance to run the table and earn a top three seed and home-field advantage possibly through the semifinals. By the way, this year the top seeds will host through the first three rounds which is a change from the past.

After that the Metro is very cloudy.

Prairie is one team that should be in the playoffs. The Hawks' final three opponents have five wins between them. With one more victory Prairie will insure its spot, then look to improve its seed and possibly get a home game in the first round.

One of Prairie's opponents is Linn-Mar. The Lions have improved throughout the season, but face a daunting final three weeks. They will need to find at least one, if not two, wins to extend their year.

The three Cedar Rapids public schools - Jefferson, Kennedy and Washington - each have one victory. The Warriors seem to have the easiest path of the three to possibly put up three wins and roll the dice on securing a spot. Kennedy would have to pull off a win against one above .500 team to get its three victories, while the J-Hawks look like they would need to pull off a win against one of a pair of top 10 teams to get in the postseason.

Looking at the Marion Indians, their chances look very bright to get into the postseason from Class 3A District 6. Currently, the Indians are tied at the top of the district standings with Solon, their opponent this Friday night at Thomas Park Field. A Marion win would clinch a berth while even with a loss the prospects look very good to play beyond week nine. The tough part facing Marion, and the rest of District 6, is that they will face off with District 5 in the first two rounds of the playoffs. That district includes top-ranked Decorah, which already owns a 35-0 win over Marion.

As far as eight-man football is concerned, Cedar Valley Christian has been eliminated from postseason contention. Going toward the end of their second year of football, the Huskies are showing some offensive improvement, but still have a ways to go before they are ready to be a playoff contender.

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That's the way the picture looks as we move into October. Plenty of possibilities still await. One thing is always certain as we move into this time of the season: the playoff picture will move between fuzzy and clear many times before midnight on October 20, when we know all of the participants in this year's postseason.

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