

Mount Mercy waiting, hoping for good news

Written by Jim Ecker

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Mount Mercy University has answered their questions, supplied the necessary documents

and made the strongest case it can for membership in the Heart of America Conference or the North Star Conference.

Now it's up to those leagues to extend an invitation and give the Mustangs a new home.

"Right now it's up to them. And then obviously - hopefully - we would have a choice to make if both were to accept us," Mount Mercy athletic director

Scot Reisinger said Monday. "Then we would have to make some decisions."

The Midwest Collegiate Conference will disband after the 2014-15 school year, with the seven current members heading their separate ways (or in some cases, together). Grand View and William Penn already have been accepted into the Heart of America. St. Ambrose will be joining the Chicagoland Conference. The AIB College of Business apparently will be swallowed up by the University of Iowa.

Mount Mercy, Clarke and Viterbo need a place to land. Clarke has applied to the Heart of America - just like Mount Mercy - and is hoping they'll join that league for the 2015-16 school year.

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It's been a topsy-turvy world in college athletics for many years, most visibly at the major college level with schools switching leagues almost at random. The colleges in the Midwest Collegiate are no exception.

"I would say it's probably more indicative of higher education in general, not just our conference," Reisinger remarked.

The Heart of America currently requires all 12 of its members to have a varsity football program, but the league could change its by-laws and invite a non-football school like Mount Mercy to join. Clarke has just voted to start a football program, which may enhance its profile with the Heart of America.

The Board of Trustees of Mount Mercy University met in Florida this past weekend to discuss many issues, including a new conference affiliation.

Mount Mercy officials have talked about the possibility of adding a football team, but no decisions were made at the board meeting.

"There was no informal or formal proposal put forth to the board this weekend," said Reisinger.

The Heart of America and North Star conferences might not take a formal vote on expansion until this spring, but Reisinger said Mount Mercy could learn more this month.

"I think there are some official votes in the spring, but I think we'll have a good idea prior to that," he said. "That's how we're approaching it."

Reisinger said one of the leagues might be prepared to make Mount Mercy a full member for the 2015-16 school year. He said the other league might want the Mustangs to wait and join their conference for the 2016-17 school year, in which case the Mustangs would operate as an NAIA independent for one year.

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Reisinger declined to indicate which league might want the Mustangs to wait and which league would open their arms immediately.

The worst-case scenario would be if Mount Mercy is denied membership in either league. In that case, the Mustangs would be prepared to operate as an independent until they find a new conference.

Reisinger said Mount Mercy would be willing to wait a year if it knew the end result would be a good home.

"If we have to go independent for a year, that's fine," he said. "We're preparing as if we're going to be an independent. We're ready to go either way. That's how we look at it."

Mount Mercy has been putting independent schedules together for the 2015-16 school year, just in case, and would modify those schedules if it joins a new conference for the 2015-16 calendar year.

Reisinger remains optimistic that Mount Mercy's search for a new conference will have a happy ending, perhaps this month.

"I would say we will know for sure where we will be," he said. "Now whether that starts in 2015-16 or 2016-17 is still up in the air a little bit."