

Mount Mercy defers offer from North Star

Written by Jim Ecker
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Mount Mercy University has been offered full membership in the North Star Conference, but the university has decided to defer making a decision for one year to see if it will receive an invitation from the Heart of America Conference.

The Heart of America athletic directors have moved "overwhelmingly" in favor of inviting Mount Mercy to join their league, the Metro Sports Report has learned. The Heart of America presidents will meet April 1 to consider making a formal offer.

Mount Mercy officials apparently would accept an offer to join the Heart of America if they are not required to have a football program. If football is a prerequisite, the Mustangs might have to make a choice: Add football or join the North Star, which does not require football.

Mount Mercy is looking for a new league because the Midwest Collegiate Conference will be disbanding after the 2014-15 school year.

The North Star Conference also has invited Clarke University of Dubuque to join its league, but Clarke has deferred as well to see if it will be invited to the Heart of America. The Heart of America athletic directors also want Clarke, so it's possible Mount Mercy and Clarke will be moving from the Midwest Collegiate Conference together.

The North Star Conference currently has seven members, with six of them in North Dakota or South Dakota. The seventh member is Waldorf, located in Forest City, Iowa. Waldorf has been a football-only member of the North Star but will become a full member for the 2015-16 school year.

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The North Star Conference also will be adding Bellevue (Neb.) and Viterbo (Wis.) for the next school year. Clarke and Mount Mercy, if they join the North Star, would give the league 11 members.

The Heart of America Conference would be a better geographic fit for Mount Mercy with schools located in Missouri, Kansas, Iowa and Nebraska. The Heart of America currently has 10 members, but Grand View and William Penn will be joining the league now that the Midwest Collegiate Conference is disbanding.

The Heart of America currently requires all of its members to have football teams, but the league commissioner has said the league could change the by-laws and admit a non-football school like Mount Mercy.

Mount Mercy has had informal talks about adding a football program, but no decisions have been made.

If Mount Mercy joins the Heart of America, the Mustangs might have to wait until the winter sports begin during the 2015-16 school to begin full participation in the league due to scheduling issues. In that case, Mount Mercy would operate as an NAIA independent this fall before joining the new conference.

If the Heart of America presidents do not invite Mount Mercy to join - or if the Heart of America requires football - the Mustangs might be inclined to join the North Star.