

## Football Notebook

## Conference divides to change the odds

By Frank Bertucci

INQUIRER SUBURBAN STAFF

A plan for splitting the Suburban One League National Conference into two five-team divisions for football was devised by league athletic directors to give schools a better chance at winning a championship in a conference dominated by Central Bucks West.

Divisions are based strictly on enrollment. The five larger schools — Abington, Council Rock, Neshaminy, North Penn and Pennsbury — will play in the Patriot Division in the 2001 season.

The five smaller schools — Bensalem, Central Bucks East, Central Bucks West, Pennridge and Harry S Truman — will play in the Colonial Division. The format was adopted in December.

Central Bucks West, C.B. East and Pennridge qualified for the PIAA District 1 Class AAAA playoffs last season. No one expects Bensalem or Truman to win the Colonial Division title in 2001, not even those teams' coaches.

"I take umbrage with the fact that this is supposed to help Truman and Bensalem," Truman head coach Galen Snyder said. "It's more of a play to help Council Rock, Neshaminy and Pennsbury players make first-team all-league. Our division will probably have about 17 West players make first-team all-league."

"The purpose and the intentions were good, they just never got to

## Suburban One National Conference

## Colonial Division

Bensalem  
Central Bucks East  
Central Bucks West  
Pennridge  
Harry S Truman

## Patriot Division

Abington  
Council Rock  
Neshaminy  
North Penn  
Pennsbury

the right end," Bensalem coach Biz Keeny said.

Under the new system, there will be two division champions and two all-division teams. Every team will play every other team, and every game will count in the standings, just as they did under the old format.

"There's a possibility where a team could win a division title and go under .500," Abington coach Tim Sorber said.

"I think what we had was pretty good," Pennsbury coach Mike Elko said. "The two schools who were most concerned wound up in the league with East and West. It's not going to have any impact on your schedule."

The Suburban One League — both the National Conference and the American Conference — is aligned according to enrollment. Every two years, schools could be re-ordered as enrollments increase or decrease. That is why Pennridge will move into the National Confer-

ence for football next season, and William Tennent will drop into the American Conference.

The league has set a precedent of granting schools exemptions so they can play a more equitable football schedule. Springfield plays in the Independence League for football rather than in the American Conference. Upper Moreland plays all of its opponents in the Freedom Division of the American Conference, but is exempt from playing the larger Liberty Division teams.

That is what Bensalem and Truman had hoped to get — an exemption.

"It could just as easily be set up by the number of participants," Truman's Snyder said. "Council Rock has 106 kids on its roster; we have 41. If we were put into a situation where we could win, I think we'd have more kids come out. Not 100, but over 50."

"I think we have to look at the number of kids a school graduates, not the number in school at the be-

ginning of the year," Bensalem's Keeny said. "We're more of a transient district. Our 1,800 kids are not the same as another school's."

"This doesn't change a thing as far as making the playoffs," Council Rock coach Mike Ortman said. "The only thing I like is that it gives players a better chance to make first-team all-league."

Last season's all-conference teams for the Suburban One National were basically a listing of Central Bucks West's starting lineup. Six Bucks were on the first-team offense and four were on the first-team defense. Abington, Bensalem and Tennent did not have a player on the first-team offense or defense. Truman had one player; Council Rock and Pennsbury had two each.

The divisional lineup likely will be in effect for the next football season only. The Council Rock district will open a second high school for the 2002-03 school year, meaning there will be one more football team. How the Council Rock enrollment will be split has not been determined.

Do not expect to see this football alignment beyond the 2001 season.

However, expect Central Bucks West to be the team to beat in the Colonial Division and in District 1, just like any other season.

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