

Newly Formed League
Leaves Number of Teams Wondering
Who They'll Play in the Future

Eight Schools Go Their Own Way And Create Chaos

By MIKE KERN
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Last month, eight schools got together to form a new, as-yet-unnamed league. The move, which had been rumored for some time, probably changed the shape of District 1 sports forever.

The new league is made up of Pottsgrove, Pottstown, Spring-Ford, St. Pius X and Phoenixville, all formerly of the Ches-Mont; Perkiomen Valley and Upper Perkiomen, both formerly of the Bux-Mont; and Lansdale Catholic, which had been part of the Bicentennial.

Those schools said the decision was based on two considerations — geography and better competition. The enrollments of the schools range from about 500 to 900, which in most cases had left them at a severe numbers disadvantage in the leagues they left.

So, on paper, it looks like a pretty sensible arrangement — perhaps an overdue one — for those schools. But for the remaining Bux-Mont schools, which had been around for 52 years, and the Ches-Mont, which was more than 30 years old, it has meant scrambling to fill the huge void.

And the operative word is scramble.

"I'm going nuts," said Coatesville athletic director Chuck Carroll. "It's been hectic, that's for sure. Since this thing broke, all I've been doing is trying to fill dates on our schedules. The way it looks now, we're [the seven schools left in the Ches-Mont] going to stick together for at least a year, and hopefully try to get another team to join us in the future. That would give us a better total to work with.

"The funny thing is, we had recently approved a new four-year schedule. So just when I thought everything was taken care of as far as that's concerned, I'm back to ground zero. And I'm not the only one."

Not by a longshot.

"I'll give you an example of what kind of problems we're suddenly faced with," Carroll said. "Next fall we have two open dates before our Thanksgiving Day [football] game [against Downingtown]. So that means, if we can't find anybody, that our kids will be waiting almost three weeks for that one last game. And did you ever try and find available opponents that late in the season?"

The Bux-Mont and Ches-Mont had tentatively agreed to fill most of the would-be byes by playing each other. But it appears the Bux-Mont now will be absorbed into the already-two-tiered Suburban One, along with Archbishop Kennedy, which, like Lansdale, no longer was wanted in the Bicentennial.

The Sub One has extended invita-

tions to anybody seeking admission, with the stipulation that applications must be received by this Friday. Four Bux-Mont schools already have taken advantage of that offer, and all indications are that the other three will do likewise.

In essence, it's the only option that makes sense.

"People got panicky, because everything was happening so fast," said Dr. James Gallagher, the principal of Central Bucks East. "It seemed like everybody was jumping all over the place, and nobody wanted to be left out in the cold. It's not easy being an independent."

Assuming that most or all of the schools that apply are accepted, the next question becomes: Will they begin competing in September of 1986 or '87, and what form will the realignment take?

It seems safe to assume that the league, with, say, 24 members, would then split into three instead of two divisions.

"This all seems like the logical move," said Suburban One president Dick Evans, principal at Neshaminy. "The main thing to remember is you're looking at what it means to the kids. That's what we're concerned with. If the Bux-Mont were left with four or five teams, what kind of season is that?"

"Our rules for expanding are very broad. And these are not normal circumstances. It's within our power to ask a school to wait one full academic year before coming in. But I would guess that in this situation, we would try and shoot for next year.

"There'd be a great deal of work involved, especially at this late date, but I think it could be done. Of course, there's still a long way to go before we even get to that point. It's not something you just want to rush into."

Four years ago, Neshaminy was one of the five Lower Bucks County League schools that entered the Sub One under a similar nowhere-else-to-go situation. And Ray Kelly, the Redskins' athletic director, feels the new additions can only make the league that much stronger.

"There's going to be advantages and disadvantages, but overall, it has to be looked upon as a plus for us," Kelly said. "It's a time of growth and monumental change. Basically we're trying to help a league that was close to us and in trouble. Here's a bunch of good schools and good kids looking for something. The Sub One was very gracious to us when we came over, and I'm glad the same courtesy is now being extended elsewhere.

"We didn't recruit anybody. The league has always been very conscious and sensitive to that. But at the same time, we'll do whatever it takes to build a quality program. You put good in, you get good out."