

The PIAA's playoff proposal, if approved Jan. 30, would make Pennsylvania the 45th state in the nation to have state football playoffs.

The reasons, Arbutina said, are time and money.

"We're very satisfied with the present setup we have right here," Arbutina said last month. "Going to a state playoff, we believe, adds to a sport which, physically, is very demanding. Going into December can interfere with other sports."

"There is a cost factor of transporting teams from one area to another, and there is inclement weather. I'll give you an example. It's snowing here right now. In a half an hour, the ground is covered."

What about the weather in December?

"People said we would have been playing in bad weather this year," Werner said. "The... weekend when the championships would have been held, the weather was lovely. The weekend before was the same thing. Early in November, when a lot of the football was played, the weather was bitter."

For at least eight teams, the football season would run almost until Christmas. Would the season be extended too long?

"I prepared a chart on a factual basis for my own use to see if such objections were valid," Werner said. "And none of them were. Most [football] championships would be held 21 days after the last regular-season date. In basketball, most of the championships were held 28 days after the last regular-season date."

Many of the questions Gallagher had about the playoffs were answered with the chart that Werner prepared.

"After you look at it, you ask yourself, 'Why wouldn't you have football playoffs?'" Gallagher said. "It doesn't involve as many schools, it doesn't involve as many kids. The last legal playing date would have been the weekend of Dec. 12l...."

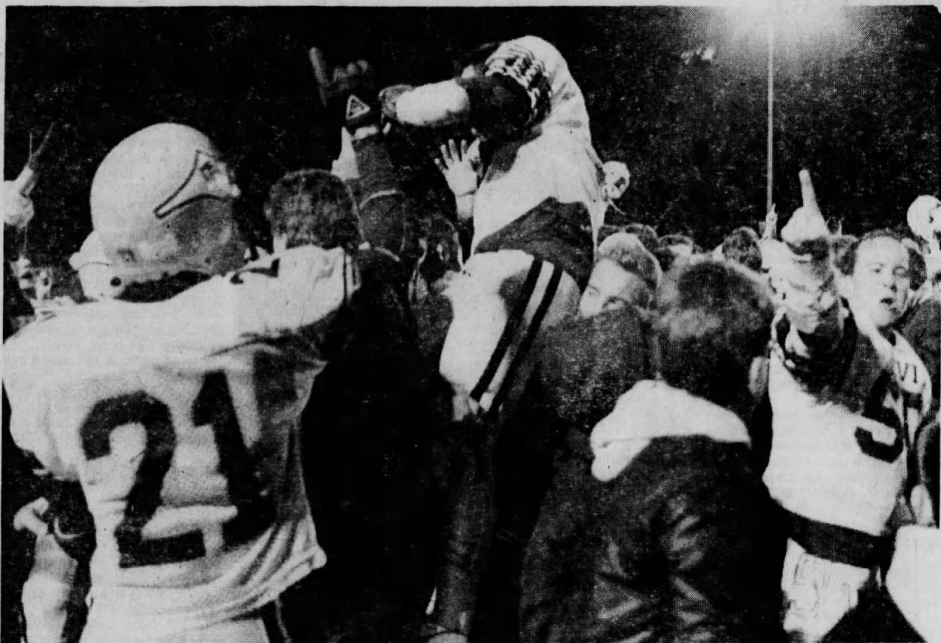
"It doesn't disrupt education. That's what District 7 is protesting. It doesn't involve as many schools as you would think. Only 16 schools throughout the state would be in the playoffs."

"If people look at it, and look at the number of schools involved, they're really amazed. It doesn't affect as many schools. And we were quizzed on this, too: We are not doing this to make money."

The first vote for state playoffs was 14-3. The second vote was 11-3, with three abstentions. Does that mean the playoff proposal is not as popular as it was?

Not necessarily. The three board members who abstained at the Nov. 5 meeting — District 11 chairman Bob Kearn, State School Board representative Nick Goble and State Principals representative Dennis Nemes — wanted to get the proposal on the table for discussion, so they voted for it when the proposal was first made.

But, according to Kearn, those three board members also wanted to get more feedback from the people they represent, and they knew the proposal had to be reviewed three



Special to The Inquirer / ROGER TUNIS

McDevitt players celebrate their Catholic League title last month. The league is unlikely to join the PIAA, even with playoffs.



Werner doesn't want to predict what will happen on Jan. 30.

times before it was approved or rejected. With that in mind, they abstained in November.

"I wanted the material to go out to the state — to my district, more specifically — to get a pulse on the proposal," said Kearn, who heads a 13-member committee in District 11.

"We're going to have a meeting in January, a week before the final vote, where we're going to sit down with the committee and determine whether they want football playoffs. If they're for the state playoffs, I'll vote for it. If they're against district playoffs, I'll vote against it."

What does the coach of Southeastern Pennsylvania's premier scholastic football team think about the playoff proposal?

Although he was one of the coaches who originally pushed state football playoffs, Central Bucks West's

Mike Pettine is not turning cartwheels over the proposal. He thinks the football season is long enough as it is.

"My point is, if you play Thanksgiving Day games and you have state playoffs, you can't be as prepared for the Thanksgiving Day games and the playoffs as you would want to be," said Pettine, whose Bucks have a 43-game victory streak — the longest of any scholastic football team in the nation.

"Ten years ago, I would have said yes. But when I look at the season now, we're going longer than the major colleges. I think the ideal plan would be to start a week earlier, play 10 games, then have the playoffs."

Would the existence of state football playoffs prompt the Catholic League to join the PIAA?

Apparently not. "I think there are too many other factors involved,"



James Gallagher
District 1 chairman

said Pat Manzi, the coach of the Bishop McDevitt football team that has won back-to-back Catholic League championships. "It's not in the near future at all."

What would happen to traditional Thanksgiving Day games in the area?

Nothing. According to the PIAA proposal, the first round of the 1988 state playoffs would be played Dec. 2 and 3 — more than a week after Thanksgiving. The state championship games would be scheduled for Dec. 9 and 10.

"Existing district playoffs would not be impacted or changed," Werner said. "Thanksgiving Day games would not be affected."

That the state playoffs would not wipe out area Thanksgiving Day games pleases Gallagher. Before taking a one-year sabbatical from his position as principal at Central

Bucks East, Gallagher was involved with one of the area's big Thanksgiving Day rivalries — C.B. East vs. C.B. West.

"We were concerned in the beginning that we didn't want to disrupt Thanksgiving games, which — as a district chairman — was something I was interested in," Gallagher said. "Especially with the East-West game."

What seems to be the biggest obstacle that must be cleared?

Deciding on a power-rating system. The Board of Control was presented in October with a point system that was devised by former Penn State mathematics professor Roger Saylor and has been used for five years by District 3 to determine its playoff qualifiers.

The Saylor System awards four points to a team for each victory and two points for each tie. In addition, four points are given to a team for each Class AAAA opponent, three points for each Class AAA opponent, two points for each Class AA opponent and one point for each Class A opponent.

The purpose of Saylor's point system is to weed out the teams that roll to impressive records by pulverizing smaller opponents. The point system also is designed to reward smaller schools that must play a schedule filled with big schools.

But Pettine sees a potential problem with such a point system. His C.B. West team is scheduled to play a nonleague game next season against Lansdale Catholic, a perennially strong Class AAA team. Should the Bucks defeat Lansdale Catholic, they will receive only seven Saylor System points — rather than the eight they would get for whipping an inferior Class AAAA team.

"They could have a better program (See PLAYOFFS on Page 15)