

THIRD

FOURTH

# high school



## Allentown Board Balks Route 22 League In—Big Eight Out?

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A Route 22 Football Conference, which would, among other things, call for the disbanding of the present Big Eight Conference after two more seasons, was formed yesterday, with the nucleus coming from what has, in recent years, been called the Big Six.

The Big Six, made up of Allen, Dieruff, Easton, Liberty, Freedom and Phillipsburg, consented unanimously to expand and change its name to the

Route 22 Conference.

At the same time, a letter was sent to Allen principal Dr. John McHugh, Big Eight president — with copies sent to every school in the Big Eight — explaining the decision.

The Allentown School Board got wind of the meeting and took immediate exception to the inclusion of Allen and Dieruff.

The Rev. Grant Harrity, president of the board, issued a statement, which was then endorsed by all other members of the board.

"The Allentown School Board has learned that this afternoon, the principals of the two Allentown high schools participated in a decision to disband the Big Eight Football Conference effective in two years," Harrity said in his statement. "It is our understanding that the decision was reached by the principals represented at this meeting.

"Without going into the merits of this proposed new league, I wish to state that as far as the school board is concerned, our membership in the Big Eight

has not been discontinued. The board was not consulted about this action and had no previous knowledge of it.

"No authority was given by this board or our athletic committee for the principals to take this action on our behalf. The Allentown School Board is not prepared at this time to make a decision in the matter of discontinuing membership in the Big Eight or participation in a new league.

"Until the matter is brought before us by the superintendent

for discussion and action at a public meeting, the two Allentown high schools are still members of the Big Eight. It is the authority of the school board to make major policy decisions, including the football league we play in. That authority cannot be abridged."

John Maitland, Easton athletic director, said the schools involved "had no intention of making any moves without the knowledge of our boards.

"We all are committed to the Big Eight for two more years,

and we realize we have to take this action back to our boards for their approval. That was decided at the meeting. Everything we have done has been above board. We are not trying to hide anything."

Disbanding the Big Eight would mean the dropping of Reading, Pennsbury and Neshaminy from football schedules of the schools in the Route 22 Conference — unless those schools could be included on an independent basis.

At the meeting yesterday, the

Big Six teams consented to add Central Catholic and Bethlehem Catholic to the new league, and Maitland said an additional provision would allow for the admission of Parkland if and when the school would desire to join.

Parkland was represented at the meeting yesterday. The school has shown an interest in realigning itself, and Maitland said Parkland officials "are looking with some favor" at the Route 22 Conference. Parkland, however, was not added immediately.

Bringing Central Catholic and Bethlehem Catholic in with the Big Six schools should cause little problem.

This past season, CCHS played four of the Route 22 teams, including Bethlehem Catholic, and went 3-1 against them. Bethlehem Catholic played five Route 22 schools and compiled a 2-2-1 record. Neither school met Allen or Phillipsburg, and Central Catholic did not face Liberty.