

Suburban Grid Campaign Is Threatened by Strikes

By EDDIE OLSEN

Inquirer Staff Writer

Frank Potter admitted it wasn't an "easy" decision.

"Sure, there's an obligation to the kids," said Upper Darby's head football coach. "After all, they've been out since Aug. 22 ... but I've also got an obligation to the Upper Darby Teachers Association.

"This is why I've decided to stay off the coaching lines; all activities must stop."

Potter called off an organized practice Wednesday after teachers and Upper Darby's school board failed to agree on a contract. He also cancelled a scrimmage with Coatesville on Saturday.

"The players are continuing to work out under the direction of the team captains," Potter said. "They're already in tip-top shape and I only hope this thing doesn't last for more than two or three days."

Other suburban high schools face strike situations that could cut into their football seasons, including Abington, William Tennent, Chester, Yeadon, Darby - Colwyn, Pottstown, Hatboro-Horsham, Bensalem and Morrisville.

Classes are scheduled to resume at Abington on Sept. 13 although teachers have yet to ratify a contract.

"We're going ahead with a business-as-usual attitude," said Abington coach Joe Shumock, who added that his team will scrimmage Ridley as scheduled Saturday.

Teachers at Bensalem are without a contract and coach Tom Frederick said he hopes he isn't confronted with a strike situation.

"If I had my way, I'd go in and do it (coach) for nothing and support the teachers at the same time," Frederick said. "We're certainly not coaching for the money and I realize that only the kids will suffer.

"But a coach is more than a coach. He's also a teacher. And this kind of situation is tough because you owe an allegiance to both places ... to the kids and to the teachers."

Frederick said he will continue to direct Bensalem's workouts "on the theory that

the season will open as scheduled."

Bensalem's opening game is Lower Bucks One rival Neshaminy, Sept. 13, and Frederick hinted that his team will play that game whether there is a strike or not.

"I really believe we owe it to the kids that we play that initial ball game," Frederick said. "But after that game, well let's just say it will depend on the school situation ..."

Coach Dennis Steiny of Hatboro-Horsham said he is

conducting practices on a "day-to-day basis" while teachers and the school board attempt to reach agreement on a contract.

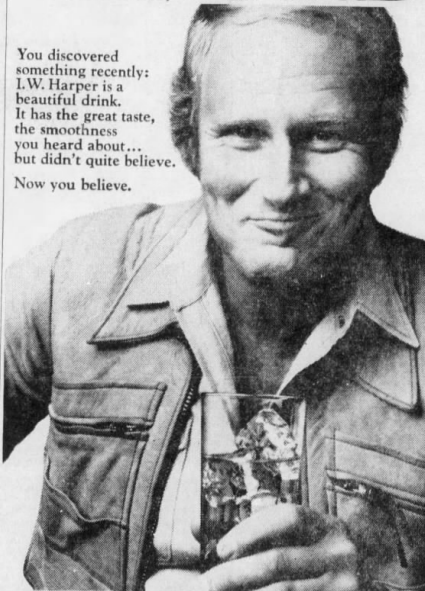
"Something like this can actually bring the players closer together," said Steiny, "because they realize that any day it's possible that they will have to go ahead on their own.

"But we're optimistic, we've had an excellent pre-season so far and I hope we'll open the season as scheduled (against Archbishop Wood, Sept. 14)."

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