

## Band-Aid solution

### Compromise allows Holy Cross to play football in Varsity League this season

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The war of words is over for now, and Holy Cross is a member of the Varsity Football League.

The senior league had vowed to keep out schools that had junior football teams but Holy Cross will now be allowed to join the loop and retain its junior football program.

The decision was made after talks between Rick Karr, the principal at Governor Simcoe and spokesman for the Varsity League, and Mike Sheahan, the physical education consultant for the Niagara Catholic District School Board.

"The understanding we have, given the lateness of this process, it would be really unfair for them to drop their (junior) team at this point. We came to this compromise that, for the kids, we have to do this for one year," Karr said.

It's a surprising compromise given how entrenched the Varsity League was in its position earlier this summer.

"It's a sport we see as a character builder and a sport we see doing a great deal for kids. If we're trying to build character, we need to act in the same fashion," Karr said.

Sheahan became involved in the discussion because the District School Board of Niagara and the

NCDSB had earlier agreed to share funding for an athletic coordinator's position.

"The support for the athletic co-ordinator position came into question when one of the sports that we saw would be part of what the co-ordinator would oversee was essentially not following what the constitution laid out," Sheahan said.

At a meeting in June of Division 2 and 3 football coaches, it was decided teams playing in the two senior leagues were prohibited from fielding a junior team.

Holy Cross appealed the ruling on constitutional grounds to the Niagara Region High School Athletic Association and the NRHSAA agreed with Holy Cross.

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The existing Varsity League teams were informed of the NRHSAA's decision during the last week

of school and were quick to respond. Coaches and principals, with the backing of the DSBN, decided to run a league outside of the NRHSAA and by early July, 13 teams had confirmed their participation in the one school, one team Varsity League concept.

All that ends with the compromise reached.

"I'm absolutely happy that we're competing at what we would consider the appropriate level for our program," Holy Cross program chair (physical education head) Dave Walker said.

Holy Cross intends to keep all its options open with regards to its junior football program.

"We're planning to keep the junior program as long as the numbers and the coaching staff warrant it. If we've got the coaches and players who want to play, we want to keep it because it's a great way to develop athletes," he said.

That stance is probably news to Karr.

"I've not spoken to them directly, but the understanding our sports consultants have is they know if they want to stay in Varsity football, they have to drop their team for next year.

"They may decide next year they don't want to play Varsity football; I don't know."

Karr is hoping in the next year the issue can be resolved to the satisfaction of Varsity football by entrenching the concept of a one-team-per-school football league in the NRHSAA constitution.

"I don't want to characterize this as an us against them; one board against another board. It's a football issue for all of our schools and everyone recognizes it has to be resolved.

"I've talked to a number of coaches and they all agree this is a catalyst to get moving on this issue that everyone just sort of ignored," Karr said.

Sheahan has also been talking to some of the coaches and their idea of the ideal resolution may be different than what the Varsity League proponents believe.

"If you talk to people who are directly involved hands-on, there's a belief it's healthy and it's not advantageous for a school to have both teams," he said.

Sheahan is hoping Varsity League proponents can be convinced of that fact.

Play in the Varsity 1 League is schedule to begin Thursday, Sept. 18.

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The position of athletic co-ordinator has been filled by Rina Rode of Grimsby and District Secondary School.

Rode will teach in the morning and fulfill her athletic co-ordinator's role in the afternoon. She will handle OFSAA transfer applications, protests from schools in various sports and work with the convenors of the various sports.

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#### THE SCOOP

football.Notre Dame.Centennial; Stamford.High School Football

Following is the new alignment of teams in high school senior

Premier League:Blessed Trinity; Lakeshore Catholic; Denis Morris, St. Paul. St. Mike's;

Varsity 1:Holy Cross; Westlane; Sir Winston Churchill; Beamsville; Fort Erie; St. Francis; Governor Simcoe; A. N. Myer; St. Catharines Collegiate; Grimsby;

Varsity 2:West Park; Lakeport; Eastdale; South Lincoln; Port Colborne; Thorold.

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