

Football leagues punt old format

Posted By **BERNIE PUCHALSKI**

With a record 26 high school teams playing football this fall in three divisions, the sport has never seen such popularity in Niagara.

Adding to the health of the sport is that all three divisions have more than one team that could win the championship on any particular day.

But rather than being content with the way things are, a decision was made Monday by the Niagara Region High School Athletic Association that could dramatically alter the face of high school football next fall.

Passed overwhelmingly by the NRHSAA was the resolution that football follow the same criteria for classification of the schools as the zone constitution states. If a school chooses to declare up or down, there is a specific process which must be followed to be considered.

Senior levels include: A which is under 500; AA is 501 to 900; AAA is 901 to 1,250; and, AAAA is more than 1,251.

In junior level, the classifications are: A is 799 or under: and, AA schools are populations of 800 or more.

In Zone 4 this year: A football teams would be Ridley College, South Lincoln, Niagara District and Thorold; AA football teams would be Beamsville, Eden, Collegiate, St. Francis, West Park and Holy Cross; AAA schools would be Governor Simcoe, Sir Winston Churchill, Blessed Trinity and Grimsby; and, Denis Morris is the only AAAA school.

One major fly in the ointment with the motion is that the Premier League plays three-down football and the Varsity 1 and 2 leagues play four-down football.

"The motion says follow OFSAA format so I would assume it's three down but I'm not really sure on that. I think there's still some discussion on that," NRHSAA athletic coordinator Rina Rode said.

"The big thing was to resolve the classification based on population," Rode said.

Also on Monday, an appeal was heard on the five-year football coaching ban issued to Sir Winston Churchill head coach Peter Perron said. A decision was reached but it won't be released until all the involved parties are informed of the decision.

POWER POLL

Following are the rankings of high school football teams in Niagara with their record in brackets.

VARSIITY 1

1. Sir Winston Churchill (5- 2): Bulldogs are two-time defending champions for a reason.
2. Holy Cross (7-0): Raiders will need to play better than they did against Eden last week if they want to defeat Churchill on their home field in the semifinals Friday at 1 p. m. They will need more than 14

passing yards -- their total against Eden -- to be successful.

3. Beamsville (6-1): Led by running back Adam Cherrie, the Bucs don't fool around. They pound you into submission and hope to do the same at Stamford in the semifinals Friday.

4. Stamford (6-1): Young squad will need to curtail mistakes if it wants to beat Beamsville. Had two interceptions and three fumbles in quarter-final victory over Governor Simcoe.

5. Westlane (4-3): Spartans head coach Jason Babony was none-too-pleased with the late schedule change that saw his team play Churchill in the quarter-finals instead of Beamsville. Five other teams were in the same boat after two Churchill wins were taken away.

6. Governor Simcoe (3-4): Redcoats closed out strong with solid effort in 22-11 quarter- final loss to Stamford.

7. A. N. Myer (3-4): Marauders closed out season with good effort against Beamsville.

8. Eden (3-4): Flyers' quarter- final loss to Holy Cross may have been team's best game of season. Eden's defence was impressive; its offence not so much.

9. St. Francis (1-5): On sidelines last week.

10. Centennial (1-5): On sidelines last week.

11. Ridley College (0-6): On sidelines last week.

12. Grimsby (1-5): On sidelines last week but still picked up win, thanks to Churchill's forfeitures.