

Delaware Valley League to Disband

Conference realignment, super-conferences, teams leaving conferences things we've heard over the last few years with collegiate sports. Well its stretched over to the high school division here in Northeast Kansas as the Delaware Valley League will see eight teams disband from the league and form their own league after the 2012-13 school year. So the 31-year-old, Delaware Valley as we know it will be in exist after one more school year.

The next league meeting is schedule for April and will most likely see those eight schools officially make the move to disbanding for the DVL and head to the formation of their own league after the 2012-13 school year. The eight schools that will be forming their the new league are: Oskaloosa, McLouth, Valley Falls, Jefferson County North, Immaculata, Maur-Hill Mount Academy, Jackson Heights and Pleasant Ridge. Six of the eight are current South division teams in the DVL, while Jackson Heights and Maur-Hill will be joining them out of the North division. "Northeast Kansas League" and "Great Northern League" have been suggested names for the formation of the new league.

With the disbanding by the eight teams, that will leave six teams in the DVL, which are: ACCHS, Riverside, Horton, Troy, Doniphan West and KC Christian (who was originally placed in the league by KSHSAA).

Multiple different reasons sparked the movement of teams to search to move to another league or form a smaller league. Scheduling conflicts have been at the forefront of the problems in the league with good and fair schedules, primarily in the sport of football could not be had for every school, resulting in chaos with scheduling. Doniphan West athletic director, Jim Howard, believed that the scheduling conflict played a big part in the disbandment.

"Lot of these issues started back when you look at the football re-districting. We had a lot of issues not being able to get meaningful schedules for everybody and the south has gotten the short end of the straw, both times I've been able to be a part of the redistricting," said Howard.

With that some schools seemed to what a smaller league while others were believed to possibly think about expanding the league.

"So kind of the line, the South schools wanted a smaller district and the schools from the North wanted to actually at first say they wanted to grow the district. Turns out after the fact the schools that some of the North leaders said who wanted to join, that was never really the case. The Big Seven had been part of the conversation, potentially joining the DVL and making it kind of a three divisions, 18 team super-league. But that was never really the reality, some of the Big Seven schools wanted to kind of form their own league, as well.... and I guess the South schools beat us to the punch," said Howard.

Schools from both divisions were possibly looking to form different leagues. To go along with the scheduling conflicts that the league size provided, some superintendents and athletic directors said the organizational purposes of having a small league played a factor in the disbanding. Jefferson County North Superintendent, Denise Jennings, said its basically making the league organization work a little easier.

"It's about making the league organization work a little easier. Basically each school, two school

representatives, most generally the AD (athletic director) and principal to the high school meetings. So you have 28 people sitting around a table trying to make decisions and that's just a large group. But this is not against, we do not want to play the Northern schools ever again; their still neighbors and I assume we will still be playing games with them, if they are so inclined," said Jennings.

Finally the other reasons swirling around were that helped spark the movement in the league were the idea of the super-conference with some of the Big Seven schools possibly coming to the DVL; but that was quickly dispelled by the members of the DVL. There was also the thought that ACCHS and a few other North schools were searching to leave for the Big Seven or partner up with Big Seven schools for their own league. Superintendent Steve Wiseman for ACCHS told me that was not the case for the Effingham. But for other schools it may have been the case.

Thus the question's sits at what will happen moving forward with all the schools involved and how do the dominos fall. Well for the 2012-13 school year the DVL exist as it stands currently with its 14 members and two divisions of seven teams. After that the plan is for those eight schools disbanding for the DVL (Oskaloosa, McLouth, Jefferson County North, Pleasant Ridge, Maur Hill, Jackson Heights, Valley Falls and Immaculata) to form their own league. With the remaining six schools (ACCHS, Troy, Doniphan West, Horton, Riverside and KC Christian) left to decide what their future conference alignment will be.

Multitple options present themselves to the remaining six schools not going into the new league, those are: search out another league affiliation, like the Big Seven or the Twin Valley League; possibly form stay together as the Delaware Valley League with all the remaining six schools; petition KSHSAA to be placed in a league or there still remains the possibility that the new league of eight schools could invite two more to be a 10 team league.

With the school affiliations after the 2012-13 school year up in the air for those six remaining schools, athletic directors, principals and superintendents are looking into every possibility. Horton high school's athletic director, Pat McAfee said they are keeping their options open at the moment.

"We're looking at just remaining with the five or six schools, were looking at the potential of another league to join...and we may wide up applying to join the eight schools again. We're keeping touch with Riverside, of course Effingham (ACCHS), Doniphan West, Troy and KC Christian.... Our futures are definitely not as good as they have been in the league," said McAfee.

For the Troy schools, they are looking into the multiple options just like Horton, having to thrown fillers out to the Big Seven and Twin Valley Leagues. While for ACCHS all things point to them going back to the Big Seven with the possibility of bring one to three, schools with them to keep the Big Seven at an even number.

Doniphan West schools, have all those same options available to them, though, Athletic Director, Jim Howard doesn't believe an invite will be extended to Doniphan West to join the other eight schools.

"I don't think getting invited to the eight team league is going to be something that happens, if it does, until we get some new leadership here at our school (Doniphan West). I alluded to it...there has been some half-truths and whole lies on the part of the North school superintendents, that lead to some mistrust and some meetings with the Big Seven that were never clearly articulated and it just caused a bad taste in a lot of people's mouths. So I don't know if that would be an option," said Howard.

Howard ultimately said that Doniphan West would most likely have to wait and see what direction the other remaining schools head in before making moves themselves.

One thing that is for sure the DVL meeting coming up on April 4th will be an interesting one and the

31-year-old DVL as we know it will not be around after next school year. ("More Than Just a Soundbite" audio on DVL disbandment is above to listen to whole on air story)