



Proposal to CIAC Football Committee – October 2023

Request:

Have an appointed centralized group assume the role of scheduling high school football games in the state of Connecticut.

Background:

With the recent move to six playoffs divisions for football, it is now clear that regular season scheduling needs a centralized force to oversee it. With more opportunities to qualify for the playoffs and more data available, it is imperative that schools play competitive like-minded schedules that assure their student-athletes get the best experience possible, and the best (and right) teams can earn qualification to the state playoffs.

While the Connecticut High School Football Alliance has had a profound impact with its goal to schedule competitive games in the regular season and generate excitement and interest in the sport, the time is right to start these important conversations.

Rationale:

Look at the Alliance: Since its formation in 2017, the Connecticut High School Football Alliance has grown to include six leagues and has scheduled more than 400 intra-league football games with the goal of providing competitive matchups based on empirical data that add excitement, interest, and credibility to the sport during the regular season. A statewide scheduling model will be the next step!

Consistency: A statewide scheduling model would put all eight high school football leagues on the same pattern for scheduling. No longer would teams, because they play in a certain league, be forced to have to play non-competitive games for the sake of “filling out a league schedule.”

For example – an SS team that plays in a league with larger schools (LL, L, etc.) should be able to play a majority of its games against like-sized opponents. And with no “league” championship games, and no league champion crowned any longer, leagues should be focused more on making sure teams play these types of games which are in the best interest of student-athletes, coaches and communities, rather than force feeding games against teams that are 2-3 times their size.

Fairness: It is much easier to compare teams by ranking in a class, and then set a schedule. Empirical data such as records, playoff appearances, but also squad size, starters/returning lettermen have become an important source of information as you compare teams. All of this important information will give this “centralized scheduling body” additional information to consider and enable this group to come up with consistent/fair schedules matching schools in the same, or similar divisions, against each other.

Flexibility. With the state, or centralized body, doing the scheduling for a majority of regular-season games (ex. scheduling 8 games and leaving the 9th date open for traditional rivalry matchups), it does leave the flexibility for teams to play their “traditional” league rivals and/or Thanksgiving opponents albeit on a different weekend.

New and Old Rivalries: While a statewide football scheduling model would still keep traditional rivalries intact to an extent, it will also be the catalyst to creating new ones that would bring interest to high school football programs and communities, especially in a small state like Connecticut where travel from one end to another is no more than two hours. Football’s once-a-week (Friday night/Saturday) schedule should be embraced and has little impact on academic schedules nor will it create school disruptions.

Moving the Sport High School Football Forward

Since the creation of the Connecticut High School Football Alliance with its six leagues and 100 schools participating (out of a total of 137), it is apparent that there is group of invested, yet diplomatic high school athletic leaders who are interested in improving the sport of high school football.

As we saw with the collaborative effort of the Alliance to propose a strength-of-schedule playoff point structure, and this “centralized” schedule approach, there is also opportunity for the CIAC Football Committee to begin to look at several other factors such as increasing the playoff field to 12 teams– thus giving more teams the opportunity to compete in the postseason.

The Committee should also take the responsibility to look at the impact of “season limitations” in the sport of football.

- Questions like, how many regular-season games do you play? (we are proposing 9).
- Do you end the season earlier? (Connecticut is the latest-ending Region 1 state for the sport of football).
- What happens to Thanksgiving (we are proposing that it be included in the playoffs and those rivalry games get moved to Columbus Day Weekend)?

All of these questions and topics are vitally important, and the Alliance leadership is ready and willing to assist. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this proposal and move the sport of football forward in the state.