

'Points' to argue on football playoff

"You know," my friend Ron Niedzwiecki tells me, "the system would be great for the newspapers. I'll buy that."

The system he refers to herein is not that one with which we're all familiar, as in beating the system. It hasn't even been approved yet.

THE SYSTEM is a proposed point system, which determines on paper which four teams might be chosen to play on turf for a state football championship.

There's a fallacy in itself.

But, one might consider, what else is there now?

That's what the Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA) is considering for a May 15-16 determination. A vote by the state's high school principals on the playoff system has been made, and the MHSAA representative council, its ruling group, will give a yes or nay.

Laker team splits pair

Two games challenged the West Bloomfield High School football team last week. The Lakers outlasted Waterford Kettering 19-10 Monday after dropping an 11-7 decision to Bloomfield Hills Andover May 6.

The games gave West Bloomfield a 4-2 season record.

The Andover game had been postponed a day because of rain, and in sloppy conditions, the Lakers lost.

But they salvaged a bit of pride with the season's first double play. Betsy Berry on second base relayed to Jo Ann DeSilvio on first for the defensive gem.

After the Baron match, West Bloomfield's centerfielder Jodi Blank, a junior, stood out with a .707 batting average, playing three of the five games.

Playing in every game, the next most accurate bat swifter on the team is Gail McMann, a freshman with a .625 percentage.

Another game was scheduled May 8 against Clarkston, but the clouds unzipped their linings and postponed the contest. The rematch will be May 31.



thinking out loud . . . by steve dougan

THE POINT system works simply.

You get 80 points for every Class A team you beat, 64 points for beating a Class B team, 48 for beating a Class C team, and 32 for beating a Class D team. You get half that for a tie, nothing for losing.

Subsequently, you earn eight points for each other victory that a team you beat gets, half that for a tie by each team you beat, and one point for each other victory by a team that beat you.

THERE WOULD be a semifinal and final rounds in each of the four classes, with each school's representative in the same regional area as is used for basketball (where Birmingham Brother Rice was this region's representative).

The point system goes from a maximum of 1,232 points possible, if you beat eight Class A opponents, all of whom win all their other games, to zero, if you lose every game and every team that beat you goes 1-8.

The system is great for the newspapers, Niedzwiecki; the head football coach at Adams, points

out, because it would do more than select the four playoff teams. It would rank the state's football-playing high schools from one to 700.

A RANKING for last season's efforts in the Oakland A League and Metro Suburban Activities Association is included. It helps show the weak points in the playoffs.

The most obvious detriment is the penalty for the Oakland A League teams. There is not much premium for a team like Rochester beating a team like Utica Ford and only earning 64 points on it. That means Rochester is immediately falling behind all the Class A teams that beat other Class A teams that week.

The Class B teams are penalized for playing over their heads. In games involving Oakland A League teams last fall, only six times in 30 did a Class B team defeat its Class A opponent. The B teams would be better off, point-wise, by beating other B teams.

NIEDZWIECKI feels the system is also likely to destroy the year-old tie-breaker rule. What team, he theorizes, would jeopardize

its chances of making the state playoff by gambling 40 points and putting the ball on the 10-yard line?

He should know. He was three times this year. Had he settled for ties, his team would have gone up 47 points in the system.

So scheduling becomes all-important in this system. Established leagues which mix Class A and B schools, like the Oakland A League, would be disrupted. The Class A and B teams in outstate Michigan would have to travel many miles to find opponents to keep up their point-rankings.

AND PLAYING for prudent points, no team would want to schedule a super non-league toughie. The risk of not getting any points is too great.

The key to this thing," Niedzwiecki says, "is to schedule tough

teams in weak leagues." Ones you can beat; he implies. Utica or Romeo might be such a team. Those squads finished one, two in a league which won only five of its 25 non-league games.

A VICTORY over Utica or Romeo was worth 136 points, 80 for their class and 56 bonus points for their other wins. A win over Birmingham Groves or Rorklev

which are poorer teams in tougher leagues, was worth only 88 or 104 respectively.

It is obvious to me that a much less subjective system of choosing a state champion is to extend warm weather in Michigan to the middle of December and have a true playoff.

Barring the course of natural events, the proposed system may be better than nothing.

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AUTO FACTS

by Bill Miller

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