



Brad Emons

Football purists support all-star game

An item came across my desk earlier this week which caught my eye.

The Michigan High School Football Coaches Association (MHSFCA) sent me a pair of press releases concerning their first annual East-West All-Star game, to be played Aug. 8 at Michigan State's Spartan Stadium.

Players were nominated by member MHSFCA coaches and then forwarded to a 12-member selection committee chaired by Cheboygan High School's Irv Siger. Thirty-six players will represent the East and West teams, respectively.

Several area players were named. Three area coaches will direct the East squad.

Football all-star games for high school seniors are common in a number of states — Ohio, Indiana and Tennessee among them.

I began to wonder what purpose this would serve. The first thing that came to mind was the risk of injury. Many of these players have accepted college scholarships. What would their future coaches think?

Not being a football purist (coach or player), the whole idea escaped me.

I went to school with a guy who was never able to play college football because he got hurt playing in a summer

all-star classic.

"I'm sure there will be a lot of pros and cons about this," said Birmingham Brother Rice coach Al Fracassa, who will help direct the East squad.

"The coaches wanted to do it 10 years ago," he said. "When it became a reality, I was really happy to see it."

"We had to go through a lot of red tape. It had to be NCAA-approved, and that's not an easy thing to do."

"THEY'RE GOING to have special rules to protect the players. There won't be any blitzing. Each team will be able to scout the other team in practice. They'll be so many plays they'll get a look at."

"We want to play good football and hopefully nobody will get hurt. But you still have to block and tackle. You don't know what will happen."

Bob Thornbladh, formerly of Plymouth, who coaches the receivers at Michigan, supports the idea.

"I think it's good," he said. "We don't require our players to play or don't require them not to play."

"Myself, I would be anxious to play. I think it would be worthwhile. I think it's a great thing for the kids. In every way it's a positive experience. The guys I talk to in other states come back

with basically the same idea."

Mark LaPointe, head football coach at Redford Thurston, goes along with Thornbladh.

"It puts us in with other states as far as being advanced in football is concerned. Ohio, Texas and Florida," said LaPointe. "I'd like to try it and see what happens."

"You're always going to have a danger of injury. You have a danger of injury in basketball all-star games where a player can go down and twist an ankle."

Dale Boone, a 6-foot-3, 215-pound lineman from Westland John Glenn, was selected to play for the East. He will attend Eastern Michigan University in the fall on a football scholarship.

"My coaches like it," he said. "They think it's a great honor to play, as long as I don't get hurt."

"In so many words, the coaches at Eastern told me to get in shape before you get there. It made me feel great to be picked. I'm really looking forward to it."

MANY OF BOONE's future teammates at Eastern will also play in the

game. Several of Michigan's recruits were also chosen.

Most notably absent is Detroit Catholic Central All-State running back Aaron Roberts, who will play this fall for the Michigan State.

"I was upset that Roberts and some of the (Royal Oak) Kimball players did not get picked," said Fracassa. "It was the responsibility of the school to send the ballot in by a certain date."

"It was the coaches' responsibility to send it in to the nominating people. Every member of the association received a ballot. Some may have put the letter aside."

Other notable absentees are All-Stars Reggie Upshaw of Farmington Harrison and Greg Washington of Detroit Western.

You get the feeling that a lot of coaches did not send in ballots because they were against the idea and wanted to protect their players.

A lot more will wait and see. This type of All-star game is in its infant stage. The coaches designed it for the enjoyment of the kids, not college talent scouts. That's why the game is scheduled in August.

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