

Prep sports realign

RUMORS ARE rife — and the rumors say that the Mid-Peninsula League will secede from the Central Coast Section.

That's a possible response to CCS management. But don't count on it. That "secession" is one option the MPL has available, thanks to the provisions of state Senate Bill 19, which provides that local school districts may administer their own athletic programs. But to the MPL Board of Managers, it is the least attractive option.

The most recent bone of contention is this: the CCS' Northern Conference voted (in questionable procedural form) to change local league alignment. MPL schools would belong, according to CCS edict, to a new and extremely unwieldy league formed from the old MPL, SPAL (what's left of it) and the Girls Private School League.

These are the teams that would be in the new league:

Aragon.....	Mercy
Burlingame	Mills
Capuchino	Notre Dame, Belmont
Carlmont	Notre Dame, San Jose
Castilleja	Presentation, San Jose
Hillsdale	Sacred Heart, Menlo
Lawrence Academy (San Jose) ..	San Carlos
Menlo-Atherton	San Mateo
Menlo School	Sequoia
Woodside	

ONE MAIN reason this proposed new league was voted into being was that the SPAL, down to five schools in some sports was desperate. The SPAL could not make up a viable schedule from its own membership.

Since there was little left of the original league, members may not have cared as much about maintaining league integrity — what the SPAL wanted was action, in the form of relegating.

The CCS (which is part of the CIF, recently elevated in status by SB19 as designated agent of the state to administer high school athletics) seems to feel that relegating is its own province (more on that later).

The SPAL has cried for help for some time. There have been many meetings and many studies. Little has come from those meetings. The SPAL has become both impatient and frustrated, particularly with the MPL, which has resisted many proposed plans.

So the SPAL was probably happy when the

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?

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19-team league (as yet unnamed) was voted into existence recently. At that meeting, the WCAL was allowed to maintain its integrity, as was the NPL. The MPL was not — and could not control the votes.

The SPAL seems to me to be administered rather loosely, and I doubt that any SPAL spokesman really speaks for the whole league.

But at least under the new league many SPAL problems are solved.

THE MPL, however, has some problems with the new league. The MPL has always had problems with recent CCS suggestions. As a result, the MPL is regarded as obstructionist throughout the CCS.

I feel that the MPL's concerns are valid.

The MPL Board of Managers is not unanimous in its opinion, although it voted Tuesday to appeal the relegating decision.

But here are some legitimate concerns:

1. That the CCS has encroached upon local control of athletics. The CCS used to have a modest budget and perform a modest function. The CCS is much more ambitious now, and seeks to administer more functions.

2. That the CCS' solutions does not address some very real local problems (for instance, several of the 19 teams are located in San Jose, and MPL teams are prohibited by their board of trustees from traveling that far for games, in light of the \$2.40-per-mile transportation costs).

3. The MPL Board of Managers — principals of the San Mateo Union High School District schools — would prefer to retain administration of their own league.

4. The proposed 19-team league in many ways specifically contradicts guidelines set up in the CCS bylaws (which provide that (a)

schools should be relatively equal in enrollment (Sacred Heart-Menlo has about 1,600 students fewer than, say, Hillsdale), (b) that the optimum basic number for teams in a league is eight (the biggest OTHER league in CCS would be 11), (c) that the scope of athletic programs in league schools be similar (a GPSL school offers a handful of sports, an MPL school as many as 24), and (d) that schools in a league be geographically proximate (how proximate, at \$2.40-per-mile, is San Jose to San Bruno?). In an informal response to these observations, the CSS shrugged and said that bylaws shouldn't be taken as commandments written in stone.

5. Several MPL people feel that administration of the 19-team league — which CCS doesn't provide for in any way — would be well-nigh impossible.

6. The MPL made its own proposal at the relegating meeting. That proposal — the first made — was not even voted upon. A proposal made by the SPAL was voted on. The MPL, which prepared hastily for the meeting, feels that proper procedure was not followed.

THE KEY to the whole problem is the SPAL.

The GPSL is included in this mishmash too, but the GPSL is so disorganized that you can hardly get any two member schools to agree on anything.

The SPAL, which is nearly moribund, began by asking for help and ended by demanding it, finally forcing a coalition of votes from leagues that had no interest in the MPL's problems . . . to dissolve the MPL.

Oddly enough, the MPL has no basic objection to helping the SPAL out.

(See Page 27, Column 3)

Prep sports

(Continued from Page 25)

There are two viewpoints within the MPL. One, to maintain MPL administration of MPL leagues, but enter into common scheduling with the SPAL. Two, to merge with the SPAL.

"It might not be a bad idea to join with the Sequoia High School District and Menlo School (which comprise the SPAL)," said Burlingame High Principal Dr. Richard Williams at Tuesday's meeting. "We might be getting a little stilted in our attitudes toward athletics."

THE OPINION of many powers that be in the MPL is that co-operation with, or even merger with, the SPAL is not the problem. Eventually, the MPL would very much like to see the MPL, SPAL and NPL schools in a San Mateo County combined playoff system — with or without the maintenance of league integrity (and the NPL is apparently set on remaining just as it is).

The problem, as some MPL administrators see it, is that the CCS is dictating without taking special problems of the league into account.

"Five years ago the CCS had a budget of \$20,000 or \$30,000," said one administrator. "Their functions were limited. Now their budget has skyrocketed, and they've added functions: setting postseason playoff systems, and directing releguing."

"They're in the playoff business. And the releguing, I think, feeds the playoff system . . . I can see them releguing every year with an eye solely to competitive balance, like in Southern California. We in the MPL think there's more to a league than just the competitive balance."

IF THE CCS rejects the MPL's appeal — which some MPL folk feel is sure to happen — what alternatives does the MPL have?

One is secession from the CCS, and isolation. That is something the MPL really doesn't want.

Another is secession from the CCS and the possible joining with other county leagues in a consortium — which would then apply for CIF membership.

The MPL has already explored the legal parameters of SB 19 with the County Counsel, just to see what the options might be, and what limitations in authority the CCS might have.

Right now, everything's still up in the air.