

UIL giving schools vote on football split, scheduling parameters

By Adam Zuvanich | October 18, 2016 | Updated: October 18, 2016 4:51pm

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Photo: Ron Cortes /For The Express-News

IMAGE 1 OF 3

Sam Houston runs onto the field before the start of the District 28-5A game against Lanier on Oct. 7, 2016, at the SAISD Sports Complex.

The ballots are being put together, and the time to vote is approaching. When the results are tallied, the course of the future will be determined.

So what will it be, Texas? More of the same or a new frontier?

No, I'm not talking about the upcoming presidential election. The matter at hand — high school football — is much more important.

The UIL Legislative Council, which met Sunday and Monday in Round Rock, will ask Texas' school superintendents to vote on two potential policy changes on a referendum ballot to be distributed in January. The most significant issue is whether to divide Class 5A football programs into two divisions before the season instead of before the playoffs, which would put it in line with the four lower classes, beginning in 2018.



Based on a recent UIL survey of 5A superintendents, who will have one vote per 5A high school in their school districts, it could go either way. On a statewide level there were 112 superintendents against the idea and 100 in favor of it. In Region IV, which includes Greater San Antonio, 28 supported the idea, 26 did not.

UIL spokesperson Kate Hector said the survey results do not necessarily indicate how an official vote will shake out. It is likely, though, the area school district with the largest concentration of 5A football teams will say no thanks.

Since the 2014 season, the seven football-playing schools in San Antonio ISD have been grouped in the same competitive district. SAISD athletic director Todd Howey said that is advantageous because it keeps regular-season travel at a minimum and creates simple scheduling at the district's two football venues, Alamo Stadium and the SAISD Sports Complex.

If 5A were split into two divisions based on enrollment, Howey said it is likely Burbank and Sam Houston would be placed in Division II with the other five schools

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competing in Division I.

“It would have a big impact on us,” Howey said. “I don’t think that would be something we would be in favor of.”

Perhaps Howey, who could petition the UIL to have his smaller schools play up alongside his larger schools, should call some of his neighbors and start lobbying.

District 26-5A includes Alamo Heights, Boerne Champion, Dripping Springs, Kerrville Tivy, Lockhart, Marble Falls, Medina Valley and Seguin. Boerne ISD athletic director Stan Leech said Champion, which is tied for first place with Alamo Heights, is in the lower half of the district in terms of enrollment and would prefer to be grouped with more similarly sized schools.

“We like the proposal,” Leech said. “I think it’s worked in the other classifications.”

The other issue on the ballot pertains to every sport except football and will be voted upon by superintendents in all classifications. In 2012 the UIL limited teams to competing in two tournaments instead of three and cut the number of meets in individual sports from eight to seven. It is now giving schools the chance to restore those events.

The UIL’s survey results suggest a majority of schools prefer to leave the scheduling parameters as they are, allowing teams some flexibility. In basketball, for example, teams can compete in



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Big 12 opts to remain at 10 schools



two tournaments and play 21 other games or participate in three tournaments while scheduling 19 other games.

If approved, the new proposal would allow those teams to schedule 21 games and compete in three tournaments beginning next school year.

“Playing more games allows you to play more players and learn more things,” Steele boys basketball coach Lonny Hubbard said. “I think it’s a plus any time we have the opportunity to play more games.”

Is having two divisions in 5A football also a plus? The classification already is split into two divisions for the postseason, but splitting it during the regular season could cause significant changes for some area teams in terms of scheduling and travel.

Texas’ 5A superintendents are charged with making that decision — and every vote counts.

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