

Sports

Football Playoffs Expand, Season Extends

Callum Like I See 'Em Some Good, Some Bad



The path to Connecticut high school football playoffs—the most exclusive postseason in the state—will get a little wider next fall. The CIAC has unveiled a new playoff format and divisional alignment that

will increase from 24 to 32 the total number of teams that participate in the state tournament.

Until now, four teams from each of six male enrollment-tiered divisions qualified for the state playoffs; under the new system, eight teams from four divisions will get in.

CIAC Football Committee Chairman Leroy Williams said expanding the postseason fields was the chief objective of the makeover, which was more than three years in the works. In many other sports, about 60 percent of all teams qualify for state tournaments. In football, that figure was only 17 percent; it will increase to 23 percent, after the changes.

In recent years, one common complaint about the football playoff format is that it sometimes prevents deserving teams from earning postseason berths. Last season, for instance, four one-loss teams were left out of their respective tournaments: Bridgeport Central (9-1) and Ridgefield (9-1) in Class LL, Masuk (9-1) in Class L and

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ROB PLASKY
NAUGATUCK FOOTBALL COACH

Prince Tech (8-1) in Class S.

“I think that’s wrong,” Woodland Athletic Director Brian Fell said.

Masuk and Bridgeport Central were regulars in the state media poll’s top 10 throughout the season.

The larger playoff fields mean adding a round to each division’s tournament and extending the season by one week. As in the past, the first round of playoff games (previously semifinals, now quarterfinals) will be the Tuesday after Thanksgiving, and the second round (previously finals, now semifinals) will be the following Saturday. The championship games will be played a week later—Dec. 11, in 2010.

Naugatuck football coach Rob Plasky, who has one postseason appearance in nine years, said he believes the revamped system will give his Greyhounds a better chance to make the playoffs.

“It’s nice for us, feeling like we don’t have to go undefeated to get in,” he said. “Hopefully, it will help create more meaningful Thanksgiving games, where we have to win for states.”

While increased postseason participation seems an undeniable benefit of the new format, the CIAC Football Committee anticipates a series of criticisms:

One is that by lengthening the season into the second week of December, the CIAC has increased the chance that inclement weather will disrupt the playoff schedule.

Another is that the extended football season will decrease participation in winter

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RA ARCHIVE

Woodland celebrated the second of back-to-back state titles in 2005. Now, it will be easier for the Hawks and others to make the playoffs, but fewer teams will be crowned champions.

What will new divisions look like?

The CIAC has not yet announced its division alignments for 2010, but this is what we know: Connecticut’s 141 football-playing schools no longer will be divided into six, male enrollment-tiered classes (S, SS, M, MM, L and LL) but rather will be split into four male enrollment-tiered classes (likely labeled S, M, L and LL, according to Football Committee Chairman Leroy Williams). CN used last year’s enrollment figures to make the following, unofficial projections. Both Naugatuck and Woodland are on the border of two divisions: The Greyhounds could end up one of smallest members of Class LL or one of the largest of L. The Hawks probably will be among the smallest in M or the biggest in S.

Class LL

New Britain (1,532)
Greenwich (1,422)
Danbury (1,363)
Norwich Free Academy (1,203)
Westhill (1,126)
Bridgeport Central (1,116)
Hamden (1,094)
Glastonbury (1,049)
Southington (1,042)
Manchester (1,008)
Trumbull (988)
East Hartford (982)
Fairfield Prep (917)
Ridgefield (903)
Staples (896)
Xavier (890)
Brien McMahon (852)
Cheshire (850)
Shelton (848)
South Windsor (847)
Newtown (847)
Amity (841)
Harding (835)
Simsbury (832)
Stamford (823)
West Haven (821)
Hall (794)
Bassick (678)
Hartford Public (775)
New Milford (775)
Bristol Central (773)
Newington (770)
Norwalk (765)
Bulkeley (751)
Windsor (742)

Class L

Wilbur Cross (729)
Pomperaug (718)
Naugatuck (714)
Conard (707)
Masuk (701)
Farmington (686)
Crosby (682)
Notre Dame-West Haven (679)
Fitch (676)
Middletown (669)
Windsor Locks/Suffield (669)
Vinal Tech/Coginchaug (664)
Fairfield Ludlowe (660)
Wilton (659)
North Haven (638)
Torrington (636)
Wethersfield (633)
Daniel Hand (630)
St. Paul/Goodwin Tech (627)
Bunnell (626)
Kennedy (623)
Darien (622)
New Canaan (617)
Maloney (613)
Fairfield Warde (613)
East Lyme (611)
Bristol Eastern (608)
Woodstock Academy (600)
Platt Tech (596)
E.O. Smith (594)
Wilby (588)
Fermi (584)
Weaver (583)
RHAM (578)
Platt (571)
Branford (571)

Class M

Lyman Hall (559)
Rockville (558)
Avon (543)
Guilford (541)
Berlin (518)
Brookfield (517)
Tourtellotte/Ellis Tech (514)
New Fairfield (513)
East Haven (505)
Coventry/Windham Tech (495)
Watertown (494)
Sheehan (493)
Wolcott Tech (492)
Cheney Tech (491)
Derby/O’Brien Tech (487)
Jonathan Law (487)
Bethel (487)
Stratford (484)
New London (481)
Hillhouse (479)
Bacon Academy (479)
Gilbert/NW Regional (476)
Windham (475)
Waterford (474)
Foran (473)
St. Bernard/Norwich Tech (469)
Joel Barlow (469)
Wolcott (465)
Tolland (462)
Enfield (460)
Wilcox Tech (457)
Ledyard (449)
Plainville (448)
Ellington/Somers (443)
Plainfield (421)

Class S

Bullard Havens Tech (417)
Woodland (414)
St. Joseph (410)
Montville (408)
Stonington (407)
Holy Cross (406)
Abbott Tech (402)
Rocky Hill (392)
Seymour (385)
Griswold (380)
Weston (379)
East Catholic (374)
Valley Regional/Old Lyme (374)
Haddam-Killingworth (373)
Ansonia (363)
Killingly (362)
Stafford/East Windsor (360)
Bloomfield (352)
North Branford (349)
Old Saybrook/Westbrook (344)
Housatonic/Wamogo (324)
Northwest Catholic (301)
Morgan (285)
Canton (281)
Cromwell (281)
Prince Tech (280)
Notre Dame-Fairfield (275)
Trinity Catholic (239)
Sacred Heart (230)
Oxford (223)
Immaculate (208)
Capital Prep/Classical Magnet (195)
SMSA (193)
Putnam (159)
Hyde Leadership (147)