



The football team is packed into the inflatable tunnel, swaying and chanting in unison. This game does not affect the official record, but you couldn't tell.

The rousing yells of the captain at the center of the mass are just a little louder, the roaring fans are just a little rowdier, and the rivalry at stake here means more than just a little non-conference game.

It's been hyped for weeks, the matchup every football player circles in their mental calendar.

The team charges out of the tunnel. The crowd roars. For the first and probably only time this season, Hunt Family Stadium is filled to the brim. The fans that spill out of the stands crowd around the fences, battling to get a better view of the action.

It's gameday.
It's ESD.
And next year, this might not happen.

Because some schools are worried about the sizable difference between the large and small schools, and two schools are leaving the conference, SPC Commissioner Bob Windham is considering realigning the conference. This realignment will be organized solely based off of number of students who attend the school.

"There would be a 4A division and

a 3A division, and the teams in the 4A division would play for a 4A championship and the teams in the 3A division would play in a 3A championship," Windham said. "There would be two championships at SPC if we did this; one for each division."

The proposition, which is to be voted on in the coming weeks, is an effort to renew the competitive balance of a conference that has become top heavy in recent years.



BOB WINDHAM
Is heading a
proposal for
realignment

"The bigger schools are really big and the smaller schools are really small," Athletic Director Mark Sullivan said. "That's been the driving force behind looking at a new football proposal for next fall."

In the current system, which is based on location rather than size, smaller teams have to play larger teams because they are nearby, rather than competing with schools of similar sizes.

"[The proposal] would realign football and potentially make it more competitive - for the small schools to have an opportunity to win a championship and the large schools to have an opportunity to win a championship,"

Sullivan said.

Additionally, some schools that currently are part of the SPC for sports other than football would be added as members of the 3A division.

"There are four schools right now that are SPC schools that aren't really playing SPC football," Windham said. "St. Stephen's and St. Andrew's in Austin and John Cooper in the Woodlands — they don't play in the SPC standing. With this new system, they would be playing for an SPC championship."

However, this proposal is based off of creating a fair playing field for the smaller school. As a large school that would be in the 4A division, this would have an impact on the competitiveness of the schedule and the variety of teams team in the confrence might play.

I THINK THERE ARE PEOPLE THAT ARE GOING TO LIKE IT AND A SCHOOL OR TWO THAT ARE NOT GOING TO LIKE IT.

MARK SULLIVAN

"It would have an impact on the competitiveness of our schedule," Sullivan said. "You are looking at lining up against all of the other big school every season, where right now, with us being in the north, we are lining up against Cistercian and All Saints and Casady

and some smaller schools than we are."

With local rivals like Cistercian and ESD falling into the 3A division, some rivalry games might no longer be on the regular season schedule. This sytem allows teams to schedule more conference games that are listed as counter games. So while the proposal may level the playing field in terms of competing for a championship, it might also get rid of some of the most exciting regular season games.

Obviously there are upsides and downsides to this new proposal, but if the changes pass, the scope of the league will be changed dramatically next season.

And if it is effective, Windham thinks a similar system could be introduced in other sports.

"We do have a task force which is being created to study doing something like that for all sports," Windham said. "We are just concentrating on football for right now. After that, we might start looking at ways that we might want to realign other sports."

It's not yet clear whether the effect on the football program would be positive or negative, but if Windham gets his way, there will be some serious changes happening in the SPC in the coming years.

"Next year there may be a different way to look at football," Windham said.

STORY WILL FORBES, CASE LOWRY ILLUSTRATION ABHI THUMMALA

Stacking up

If SPC Commissioner Bob Windham's plan for realignment is approved by the schools, St. Mark's would move in to a new 4A division. Here's how the conference is currently arranged and how it's projected to turn out if the proposal passes.

Current North Zone

All Saints
Casady
ESD
Fort Worth Country Day
Greenhill
Holland Hall
Oakridge
St. Mark's
Trinity Valley

Current South Zone

Bellaire Episcopal
Houston Christian
Kinkaid
John Cooper
St. Mary's Hall
St. Andrew's
St. John's
St. Stephen's
Cistercian

50%

Projected 3A

All Saints
ESD
Houston Christian
St. Andrew's
Oakridge
Casady
St. Stephen's
Cistercian

In the Projected 4A division, 50 percent of the teams are currently in the North Zone with St. Mark's.

Projected 4A

Kinkaid
Bellaire Episcopal
St. Mark's
St. John's
Greenhill
Fort Worth Country Day
Trinity Valley
John Cooper



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