



By Tim Linscott

Managing Editor

Downsize and maybe dominate or stay larger and try to be competitive?

This is the question facing Perkins County Schools in regard to staying in 11-man football or dropping down to eight-man football.

Perkins County football coach and athletic director Carlie Wells recently explained that student population numbers in grades 9-11 mean the district could drop down to a large D-1 school or remain at a C-2 level.

PCS currently has 81 students in grades 9-11 and any school below 83 students in those same grades can be eligible for eight-man football and the playoffs. Districts can be over 83 students and still participate in eight-man football, but will not be eligible for the playoffs.

There are positives and negatives either way and Wells feels the public's input will be critical in guiding the school board's decision.

He presented a timetable and possible scenarios to the school board on Sept. 16. With current enrollment figures and projections, PCS could drop to eight-man football, in essence, for the next 10 years. However, the district could stay at 11-man football for the same time frame.

What is best?

Wells is hoping the community will help guide him and the school board.

A decision has to be made this fall (Nov. 1) as the schedules are released February 12, 2014 and is a two-year commitment.

"You can go back up or down a class, if you have the numbers, but it is a two-year deal," Wells said. "A district can try it to see for two years and go back if they don't like it or the district doesn't want to do that anymore."

A potential drawback to staying in 11-man football with smaller numbers of players out for the team is younger players are on the field.

"You have eight to ten seniors and seven to ten juniors, you may have to play some freshmen or sophomores," Wells said. "Sometimes those kids aren't quite ready to play and may not be

physically ready to play. There can be a huge physical difference between seniors and freshmen.”

A decision on going to eight-man or staying at 11-man football must be made by November 30. The top teams in Class C-1, C-2, D-1, D-2 usually have higher numbers of students.

Wells coached for Elgin Public/Pope John after the districts had a co-op for football, which made it a large D-1 school. Wells won state championships in 2011 and 2012 in Class D-1.

Aquinas Catholic in David City has won two-straight C2 titles with two undefeated seasons and the 9-11 grade number's last year for the Monarchs equalled 108 students.

Class size may be one aspect of achieving goals in football in C-2, but talent may also be an issue. Last year Aquinas defeated Sutton for the state title, which had only 83 students in grades 9-11 and posted an 8-0 regular season record.

IE *Look up championship teams last 5 years, student population of each. Then look at teams that did not make playoffs, their student population or within same class, look up all school in conference, find pop of each team, who won, records of each.

Wells has not said which way he would lean on the subject.

“I came here to coach 11-man football, but I also want our kids to find success. You don't want to have a small team, it doesn't build confidence,” Wells said. “But our boy numbers (out for football) look really good.”

Positives for staying in 11-man football include the numbers for the Plainsmen being high and tradition plays a lot into a decision.

“I think our numbers will be alright. We have a great tradition here,” Wells said. “Some may think 11-man is the only way to go, and another thing to look at is there are teams in 11-man around here.”

Area schools in Class C-2 are Cambridge, Dundy County/Stratton, Bayard, Bridgeport and Hershey.

However, there are also eight-man teams in the area, including Paxton, Sutherland, Maxwell and Garden County.

Cambridge has qualified for eight-man football for the last 10 ten years and decided to stay in 11-man.

Josh Graves, athletic director and football coach at Cambridge, explained tradition has kept the Trojans in 11-man football this entire time and will continue in the near future. However, he explained that due to numbers and their recent record, things may change in the future (see sidebar on Cambridge, Page 3).

Whichever way the public decides, Wells is hoping to make the community proud and make his players better people in the long run.

“For some people maintaining the tradition and history here is important. You always want to build on that,” Wells said.

***Editor's Note:** What is your opinion on this topic? Comment on the subject on our Facebook page or on our website www.grantribune.com. Comments can also be sent via e-mail to grantrib@gpcom.net or call (308) 352-4311.