

Fambrough: It might look confusing and unconventional, but the LHSAA's new split plan deserves a try

Peter Barker September 10, 2022



When the original split between selection and non-selection for football was approved by LHSAA member schools in 2013, I spoke to several principals who voted. My last interview ended with a comment I will never forget.

"In Louisiana, we like to try different things," I'm told. "Maybe we'll go back to what we had. Or try something else."

More than nine years later, at least for the 2022/23 school year, "something else" stands. It's really something else.

A plan devised by LHSAA staff and Executive Committee members that would divide schools into four select divisions and four unselected divisions in the divided sports of football, basketball, baseball and softball was unveiled Friday.

Think outside the box, we are often told. This is outside the box. The revised definition of what a selected school is gives the LHSAA an almost 50-50 split on either side for selected/non-selected sports for the playoffs.

But...it also leaves schools in their traditional five-grade (football) and seven-grade (basketball, baseball, softball) regular-season structure, including districts. And there are several instances where a school plays in different divisions depending on the sport.

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Confusing? Yes, this is a last minute adjustment for everyone as there are eight weeks left in the regular football season. I see more overall competitive balance than the current select/nonselect system that was the goal.

This was previously done with different parameters. First with the soccer split and again as the split widened.

Since LHSAA members might refuse to ratify that plan in January, the process reminds me a bit of the old Life Cereal commercials... You

know, "Hey Mikey... he likes it."

It's a gamble. No guarantees. Why not consider about two years or the length of this classification cycle? Just a thought.

Contrary to popular theory, this plan is not designed to end the schism. Instead, it is reinterpreted using educational models to address key points.

The ability of private schools to attract students outside of traditional attendance zones to gain an unfair advantage and more championships created a split between the chosen and non-chosen.

Now schools nested in favorite roles on every page. An imbalance in school counts on the selected/non-selected side was referred to as an "intentional circumstance".

But it's not the only one. The current separation is also forcing teams with lost records and sometimes without wins into the playoffs. They lose on the field and also financially as they have to travel as lower seeds.

The new LHSAA plan solves this problem. Playoffs and championships are not, and should not be, the goal of every school every year.

Wait, is a regular competitive season and experience really enough? It's been decades since brackets and expectations were smaller.

Then settings were adjusted along with many other things. Could this plan be the adjustment the LHSAA needs now? We won't know until we try.

[Source](#)