



Batavia, Geneva poised to join UEC

Daily Herald Staff Report

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The Upstate Eight is preparing to invite Batavia and Geneva to join the conference and form a league with two seven-team divisions for the 2010-11 school year, the Daily Herald has learned.

St. Charles North athletic director John Rutter said the Upstate Eight is waiting for paperwork from the interested schools. Once it is received the school superintendents will meet, and Rutter hopes it will be official in two to three weeks.

Only a week ago, Batavia athletic director Mike Gaspari expressed his frustration when five Western Sun schools - DeKalb, Kaneland, Yorkville, Sycamore and Rochelle - opted to leave the 3-year-old Western Sun after the 2009-2010 school year.

That left Geneva, Glenbard South and Batavia without a conference. Less than a week later it looks like Glenbard South is the only school left searching for a conference.

"For me personally I feel much better than I did last Friday," Gaspari said. "We are excited about the prospects."

Gaspari said he was very surprised at how fast it came together.

"We like all the (Upstate Eight) schools and compete against them now," Gaspari said. "They are close geographically, which is a top priority for us with all the midweek games."

The Upstate Eight's new divisions will be based on enrollment, South Elgin principal Melanie Meidel said.

"There's pros and cons to it," Meidel said. "Of course, bringing them in balances things and scheduling will be so much easier. Having an odd-man out here and there, off and on, has been a struggle. We struggled with this when I was an AD at Elgin High and we had DeKalb, then DeKalb left.

"The division thing was just starting to get organized and then this jumps in. It's the same look, though. We made all those division decisions to start next year. So basically, it's the same concept now just with more schools."

The UEC now has 11 schools, with Metea Valley to open in the fall to freshmen and sophomores, adding varsity teams for the 2010-11 school year.

Meidel was not sure how this plan came about.

"I came into the meeting a little late, but from the knowledge I have, we did not. We were not looking. We were working so hard to get the divisions the way we had them. We were not the ones looking," she said.

Meidel said the football season likely will include six conference games with rotating crossovers.

Glenbard South, with an enrollment of about 1,400 students, is expected to look for a league with schools of similar size.

Neuqua Valley, the biggest school in the UEC, has 4,520 students, according to the IHSA Web site. Batavia has 1,858 students and Geneva 1,978.

Jerry Fitzpatrick, John Lemon, John Radtke and Orrin Schwarz contributed to this story.

The New UEC?

North Division - Elgin, Larkin, Streamwood, St. Charles East, St. Charles North, Geneva, Batavia

South Division - Bartlett, South Elgin, Lake Park, Neuqua Valley, Metea Valley, Waubonsie Valley, East Aurora