

October 1, 2015

Dear Mr. Fetsch and Members of the NDHSAA:

Hello, my name is Jay Schneider, and I am writing a letter on behalf of the students, parents, my son, wife, and myself to have the Devils Lake Firebird Football Team moved down from AAA to AA football in the next two year plan.

I used to be an assistant and head football coach in the Devils Lake Public School System for 16 years. I decided to resign/retire from coaching football so that I could spend more time following and supporting my son and daughter in their school activities as they get older.

As a football coach in AAA football for 12 of the 16 years, I enjoyed the challenge of playing and beating schools that were two and sometimes 3 or 4 times our size but those days of actually "winning" and not just being "competitive" were getting fewer and farther between. But, what really got very hard to take, was the severe and numerous injuries that our kids were taking because of the tremendous size of athletes and number of athletes that the larger schools would be able to throw at us. When we were in AA football, we didn't have as severe or as many injuries as we have had in AAA football. In the AA division, the worse injuries that we had were high ankle sprains. Over the years in AAA football, I witnessed broken legs, ACL tears, broken hands and arms, concussions, etc.... and other severe injuries too numerous to count. Our kids would work their tails off but because of sheer "numbers" we would eventually wear down and get injured and lose the ball game. When we have student-athletes get injured in Devils Lake, we aren't able to replace them with another senior or junior, we may have to go down to a sophomore or freshmen. And when you put a sophomore out against a senior more bad things tend to happen. I would ask any of you this question, "Would you play football for a school or anyone that on an average year, wins 2 to 3 games a year in this division, and also play schools that have 39 seniors in a class when you only have 5 to 10 and also have the great possibility of getting injured? **Would you?**" You probably would if "you truly love the game" but some kids don't and when they are on that fence, they tend not to come out if that is what they have to look forward to.

Our numbers out for AAA football also weren't as good as they were for AA football in the 4 years that we were in that classification. In AA football, I had to tell some kids that they could not dress for playoff games because we would exceed the 55 total that were allowed to dress as a rule for NDHSAA. That wasn't an easy thing to do, so we didn't get fined or not allowed for other post-season competition, I had to do it. By the way, that was with only sophomores through seniors on the team. However the last couple of years in AAA football, I had to dress freshmen through seniors and I only had about 45 total out for football in those 4 grades. This year, I think, Coach Wateland has about 40 in grades 10-12 out for football. Most of the larger school, may dress sophomores but they are hand-picked or not even dressed at all.

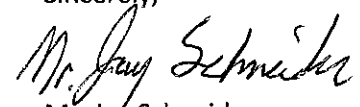
Also, I had heard as a coach, that some of the smaller AA schools didn't like having us in their division because they felt it was unfair for us to be there because we had 250 boys to choose from and

they only had 100 or 150. "That's not fair." Is what I heard. But is it fair for us to go play Minot who has 1000 boys' vs our 250 boys? Another complaint that I heard, was we have to have 16 teams for scheduling purposes or have to have an even number of teams in the division. This to me was a bunch of hog wash! Especially, when some teams are still playing in city teams of different divisions or playing teams from different states. Scheduling/travel/even numbers/same number of teams in a conference should not be a reason ahead of safety of athletes for the reason teams are put into divisions or classifications!

Now that I've addressed some of what I was able to witness first hand in games against the larger schools for 12 years, I want to ask, now as a parent of a sixth grade football player who really enjoys the game, to seriously consider moving Devils Lake down to AA football in the next two year plan and beyond. Our kids here in Devils Lake, more than anything, deserve to play a game they want to play and be safe doing it. I really believe that the issue **NOW** is about the safety of the student/athlete and nothing else! With the larger schools and communities getting larger and larger and the smaller communities staying as is or also getting smaller, the disparity in school sizes is getting quite immense and therefore the size of the athletes are getting to have a larger disparity too. I know a football player can get injured at any classification of football but it just seems that there would be a lot less of a chance when you put kids up against kids that are more about the same size and numbers then what we are currently at. Please, consider this when you do your classifications for the next two year plan for football.

I know you will do what is right for the health and well-being of our student/athletes as you have done for many, many years! Thank-you for your time in this matter.

Sincerely,



Mr. Jay Schneider
Devils Lake, ND

Matthew Fetsch
North Dakota High School Activities Association
PO Box 817
Valley City, ND 56072-0817

October 1, 2015

Dear Mr. Fetsch and colleagues,

Please consider reclassifying Devils Lake Public Schools to AA Division for sports.

Our enrollment numbers are statistically and historically lower than the AAA Schools in the state. This makes recruitment harder and we typically have much smaller pools of students that even go out for sports **due to having** smaller numbers in general.

We believe that not only is it a deterrent for our kids to even go out for sports, it is also a safety issue when the biggest kids from bigger schools are playing the biggest kids from our schools. The "pool" of potential players at DLHS is much smaller, both figuratively and literally.

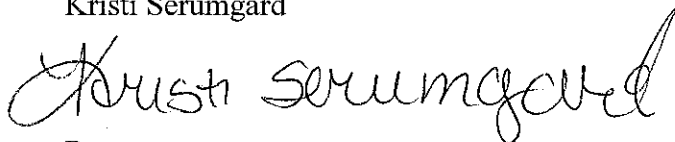
At the last home game I watched Devils Lake players get injured on the field, from bigger kids who are used to playing against and practicing against kids of their own stature.

At this game, from injuries incurred in recent games, one of our players watched the game with crutches, one with a broken arm, and one while wearing a surgical boot.

I don't know how the teams are classified on the state level, and what criteria is used, but please consider enrollment numbers and injury numbers when you look at Devils Lake, and put us where we belong: AA.

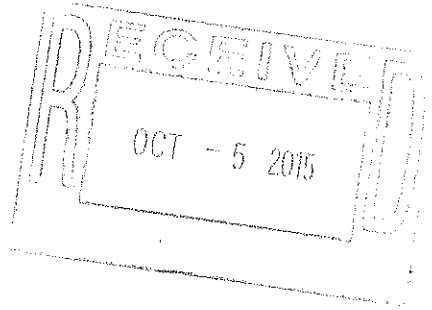
Thank you very much for your consideration of this issue.

Kristi Serumgard



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Devils Lake Central Middle School
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Matthew Fetsch
North Dakota High School Activities Association
PO Box 817
Valley City, ND 56072-0817



October 1, 2015

Mr. Fetsch

This letter is in regards to the Devils Lake High School Football. Please consider reclassifying the team to "AA". My son will have already graduated but on the scale of fairness I ask the board to consider that the bigger schools and urban centers have much more of an advantage with the numbers that these schools have.

It is important for these boys to play the game in the division in which they are placed, but I would contend that Devils Lake is not less than other schools like Valley City and Oak Grove in Fargo. I do feel that we put your board in a difficult position, but when you watch the game, there is a definite division in South Fargo playing a Devils Lake school is absolutely foolish, not only to Devils Lake but to the kids of the Fargo South School.

Please make this change in the NDHSAA so that all the kids of this state can play a game that they love in a division that is not weighted to an unfair advantage of where they live.

Thank you

John A. Martin