

High school sports

OSAA to keep six classification system



DANIELLE PETERSON / STATESMAN JOURNAL

Silverton's Kayce McLaughlin and La Salle's Aleah Goodman battle for the ball March 10.

Committee has shelved its 5A proposal

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The OSAA's Classification and Districting Committee in a release Thursday afternoon stated that it will keep Oregon's high schools in a six classification system for sports.

Previously the committee had expressed supporting a five classification system that would have eliminated a classification from the current 6A model.

But that was countered with significant pushback and the committee backpedaled to stay with the current six class system.

"Discussions centered around the fact that the membership appears to be split, at best, on the different approaches and the overall belief that the membership doesn't appear ready to make the

wholesale changes across the board that would result from a change to five classifications," the committee's release stated.

The most recent proposal from the committee puts Salem-Keizer schools McKay, McNary, South Salem, Sprague and West Salem in a six-team league with McMinnville.

North Salem, which has been approved to play down, would be in a league with Central, Corvallis, Crescent Valley, Dallas, Lebanon, Silverton, South Albany and West Albany.

The next public meeting of the committee will be at the Al Kader Shrine Center in Wilsonville.

The committee will make its final recommendation for the 2018-2022 time block on Oct. 16, 2017.

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PHOTOS BY ANNA REED / STATESMAN JOURNAL

Kennedy senior Bishop Mitchell, center, competes in the 100 meter dash in the Regis Twilight Track and Field Meet at Regis High School in Stayton on Friday.

EXCELLING ON TRACK, FIELD

Kennedy's Bishop Mitchell will miss success as 3-sport star

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MT. ANGEL - Imagine if track and field was Bishop Mitchell's main sport.

The football star has the best Class 2A marks in the 200, long jump and triple jump and is No. 4 in the state through all classifications in the long jump.

Kennedy High School coach Steve Ritchie contemplated the hypothetical of Mitchell focusing on track several years ago and saw a potential decathlon star.

"Since eighth grade we were trying to convince him that his future was as a decathlete," Ritchie said.

Mitchell, a senior at Kennedy, is best known for his exploits on the football field and for good reason. He rushed for 2,217 yards (9.9 yards per carry) and 28 touchdowns last season, helping the Trojans reach the state semifinals, and was named offensive player of the year.

At 5-foot-9, 175-pounds, Mitchell utilized his strength and speed to dominate at the 2A level. He received a scholarship from Portland State and hopes to compete for playing time immediately as a running back for the Vikings of the Big Sky Conference.

Whether track is part of Mitchell's future in college has yet to be determined, which means the OSAA Class 2A state meet May 18-19 in Eugene could be his last hurrah.

He has the state's best 2A marks in the 200 (22.83), long jump (22-10) and triple jump (42-7), and ranks second in the 100 (11.14) and pole vault (13-6).

"I'm gonna miss it a lot. Same with basketball," said Mitchell, a three-sport standout at Kennedy. "I'm gonna miss having three sports a year."

It's not unusual for football players to participate in track in college, but Mitchell's main priority will be football. The PSU coaching staff wants him to add 15 to 20 pounds, while maintaining his



Kennedy senior Bishop Mitchell competes in the 100 meter dash.

speed, in preparation for the bigger, stronger and faster athletes he'll compete against in college.

About the only thing missing from Mitchell's high school resume is a state championship.

He's come close. Kennedy's football team lost in the 2015 state championship game to Heppner and bowed out in the 2016 semifinals to Stanfield.

In last year's state track meet, Mitchell was second in the 200 and long jump, and anchored the second-place 400-relay team.

While Mitchell acknowledges that winning state championships have always been a goal, it is not an obsession.

"Awards collect dust," he said. "But the brotherhoods you get and the teammates you find are worth a lifetime."

Still, Mitchell would love to go out in style at the state meet.

But first things first. The Tri-River Conference meet takes place May 11-12 at Scio, with the top two placers in each event qualifying for the state meet.

Mitchell plans to enter the 100, 200, long jump and triple jump at districts, where athletes can compete in a maximum of four events.

The 200 is Mitchell's best running event because "I have all that space to make up for my bad start."

"I'm usually last out of the blocks," Mitchell said.

A good start is vital in the 100, and it has been an issue for Mitchell.

"That's where he can improve the most," Kennedy sprints and jumps coach Robby Morrissey said. "He could easily

go under 11 (seconds). ... His best aspect is really chasing from behind and his acceleration, being able to keep that speed."

Attributes that continue to benefit Mitchell on the football field.

PSU was the only Division 1 college - the Vikings are part of the Football Championship Subdivision - that offered Mitchell a scholarship. Had he played at a bigger high school, he might have received more college football recruiting attention.

But Mitchell has no regrets about playing 2A sports at Kennedy.

"Family is the main reason I've been here," Mitchell said. "Not just my family, but everyone's family (at Kennedy) so that helps me a lot. I know these kids here."

Despite Mitchell's athletic success - he's also an honors student - he remains humble.

Christian Reyes, a junior sprinter and hurdler for the Trojans, said Mitchell "doesn't let people think that he's better than anybody else."

"He wants other people to think they're as good as him and they can do as good as him," Reyes said. "He's fun to be around."

Ritchie called Mitchell "a great kid" and "a really hard worker."

Mitchell has much to look forward to in college and it's not far away. PSU begins preseason football camp the first week of August, and the Vikings first two games are at BYU (Aug. 26) and Oregon State (Sept. 2).

But goals remain for him at Kennedy. After placing second in three events at last year's state meet, Mitchell has a chip on his shoulder.

"Kind of redeem myself from last year, placing second in a lot of events," he said. "Trying to prove to myself that I'm better than I was last year."

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