

Football league to change

By Joey Falkoff

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The Colby Eagle football team will not be playing for a Northwest Kansas League championship in the next two years. Not because of a lack of talent on the Eagles part, but rather a lack of students that are currently filling the halls of Colby's rival schools in the league.

The 2008-2009 Kansas high school football classifications were announced Thursday, Sept. 27, and based on student counts from grades nine through 11, all Northwest Kansas League schools other than Colby, St. Francis and Rawlins County/Atwood had a decline in enrollment from the last count done in the fall of 2005.

The change in classifications has led to combining the Northwest Kansas League with the Mid-Continent League for football and dividing the new league into divisions based on the size of the schools and their success or lack of it in football recently. This is expected to have an impact on schedules, rivalries and traditions.

The biggest loser in the area from the new classifications is Goodland, who saw their enrollment drop seven students to 197. The cutoff for 4A was 202, meaning for the first year since schools were divided into classifications based on size in 1969, Goodland will no longer be a 4A school.

"I think we had a good idea this was coming," said Goodland Athletic Director Don Smith. "It's disappointing for us in two ways. Losing your student base is tied to school revenue, so that's going to hurt all of our programs. Also, being two students above the count in 4A for all other sports except football, we're going to be the little kid on the block the next two years."

Of any Northwest Kansas League school, Hoxie saw its enrollment take the biggest hit. In just two years, Hoxie has gone from 78 students to 64, making them the smallest 1A/2A school in Kansas.

Other Northwest Kansas League reclassification losers were Oakley (113 to 108), Oberlin (112 to 102)

New high school league to have three divisions

Football scheduling scenarios for the combined Northwest Kansas League and Mid-Continent League have already been presented to each school in both leagues, but before those scenarios were passed out, the two leagues agreed to divide the newly formed league into three tiers.

The 'A' division will include schools with the largest enrollments and schools with above-average enrollments that have

had recent success in football. Gabel said that division will likely include Colby and schools like Smith Center, Norton, Goodland and Phillipsburg.

The 'B' division will be home to schools who have a low enrollment, but have had recent success on the gridiron like St. Francis and Oakley.

The 'C' division will include schools with a low enrollment and not much recent football success like an Atwood or Osborne.

and Quinter (79 to 75). Beginning next year, Quinter will start playing 8-man football.

Colby actually saw the biggest increase in students of any school in the Northwest Kansas League going from 238 to 249, but with the large disparity from the biggest 4A school (Bishop Miege, 552) to the lowest (Neodesha, 203), Colby still isn't exactly competing on a level playing field.

Because of the growing disparity in enrollment between league schools, the Northwest Kansas League and Mid-Continent League have agreed to merge in football for the next two seasons. Knowing this would eventually have to happen, representatives from both leagues have been working on this proposal since last year.

Wednesday in Salina, representatives from each school in both leagues met to hammer out the schedules for the next two football seasons. Having to merge conferences is not something Colby High Athletic Director Larry Gabel wanted to happen, but it's the reality of the situation in western Kansas.

"Schools are losing enrollment

all over, so it's difficult to schedule games with some of our league schools right now," said Gabel. "There really won't be a Northwest Kansas League champion anymore. We lose that tradition, and it's not something we want, but with the changing population, we have to do what's best for our football team."

One of the goals for the new league was to play as many games against familiar opponents as possible to keep the league ties strong. Gabel, though, has come to the realization that playing former league opponents more often than not will not be do-able.

Prior to the league schedule being worked out, the first thing on the agenda in will be to figure out the new districts for each school.

The districts are randomly assigned by the Kansas State High School Activities Association, but because of the loss of Goodland to 3A, the closest 4A school to Colby is now Ulysses, 135 miles away. Therefore, Eagles fans better get used to lengthy drives for at least one of the last three games each of the next two years.

"It's possible Clay Center (263

miles away) or Abilene (224 miles away) could be in our district," said Gabel.

Other district possibilities that Gabel mentioned included Pratt and Concordia. One game Eagles fans should be able to count on for a short trip the next two years is with Goodland. Although the Cowboys are moving to 3A and can no longer be Colby's final opponent of the season, Gardner expects the rivalry to be just as intense in the future.

"I'm not disappointed that Goodland is no longer 4A," said Gardner. "We'll still play Goodland every year, and whether it's in the middle of the season or at the end, it will still be a rivalry game."

Smith has similar feelings, but he is more concerned about losing the rivalry in other sports.

"For years we've been the largest school in the league, and we've gone out and competed against 1-2A schools," said Smith. "Enrollment doesn't affect the intensity of a rivalry. However, this is still not finalized, but there's a very good chance next year that we won't play Colby in sub-state basketball, wrestling or volleyball."

Even more so than the impact of the new realignment on the Goodland/Colby rivalry, Smith is more concerned about viable long-term solution for a population problem in the area that doesn't appear to be getting any better any time soon.

"I think there needs to be a discussion on where we're heading," said Smith. "Each school needs to look at their own situation and what we're trying to do. We've focused primarily on remaining competitive in football, but what creates a problem is that not every school in our league offers the same sports. The Northwest Kansas League has to look beyond football. I foresee some changes to be carried out here soon. I think it would be silly for us not to do some planning for each school and for the league as a whole."



Sophomore Ben Waugh finished 39th out of 59 runners at the Oberlin Invitational Cross Country meet Tuesday, Sept. 25.

Photo by Michelle Cooper

Runners to compete Saturday at Lakin

The Goodland cross country teams will compete at 9 a.m. Saturday at Lakin and at 10 a.m. Saturday, Oct. 13, at the Northwest Kansas League meet at Oberlin.

The Cowboys earned a team score on the Oberlin course Tuesday, Sept. 25, ending up sixth out of seven teams with 128. Norton won with 33, Colby was second with 60 and Quinter third with 83. Wheatland had 103, Oberlin 124 and Phillipsburg 170.

For the Cowboys, senior Dustin Pennington was 27th out of 59 runners, finishing the three-mile race in 19 minutes, 8 seconds. Freshman Steven Buller was right behind him in 28th in 19:22. Sophomore Ben Waugh was 39th in 20 minutes

with freshman Talison Crosby right behind in 40th in 20:13.

Senior Martin Stadelmann, foreign exchange student from Switzerland, was 47th in 20:51, junior Justin Verlinden was 50th in 21:47 and freshman Michael Pettibone, returning from an injuring in a car accident, was 51st in 21:48.

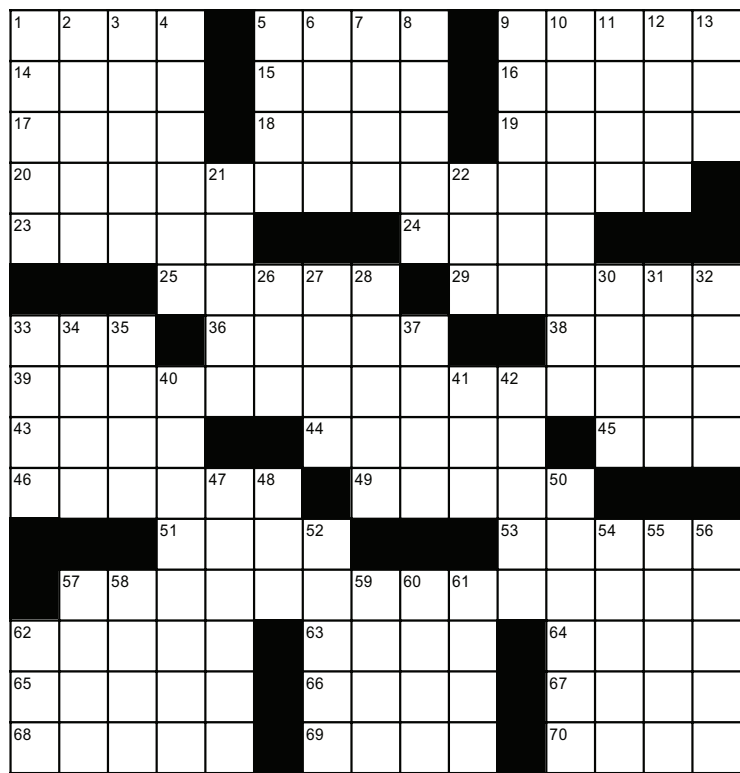
In junior varsity, junior Dallas Price earned a medal for eighth place, finishing in 21 minutes, 10 seconds, and senior Chris Geeseka was 33rd in 27:50.

For the Cowgirls, junior Cassie Cooper was 37th, finishing the 2.5-mile race in 19 minutes, 8 seconds. Senior Mindi Keith was 57th in 24:44 and freshman Kaitlyn Lambers was 58th in 25:04.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Way Out There

- ACROSS**
- Prepares to fire
 - Hostilities ender
 - Christian symbol
 - Pesky flier
 - Scandinavian capital
 - Copter part
 - Ticklish Muppet
 - Potpie spheroids
 - Greek I's
 - Great-great-great-great-great grandfather, e.g.
 - Fashion sense
 - Compass lines
 - Terrific buy
 - Swindled
 - "___ tree falls ..."
 - Move to fresh soil
 - Take apart
 - Not-so-cordial handshake
 - Per item
 - South Korea's capital
 - Playground game
 - Parthenon site
 - Fine violin, for short
 - Toy dog, familiarly
 - Gymnast Comaneci
 - Result of a too-short eyeball
 - Chimney channels
 - Hockey thug
 - Sorry situations
 - Human trunks
 - "This can't be!"
 - Gen. Robert ___
 - Partner of desist
 - Eggy quaffs
 - Hang in there



American Profile Hometown Content

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- Bar perches
- John, Paul, or John Paul
- On the bounding main
- Hatfields or McCoys
- Puccini classic
- Shortening brand
- Removes entirely
- Director Preminger
- Fly high
- Many AARP members
- Neon ___ (aquarium fish)
- Boot one
- Poet's dusk
- Many N.Y.C. dwellings
- Stadium sections
- Make bootees, e.g.
- TV's Dame ___
- Rapper Snoop ___
- Light bulb, in comics
- Via Appia auto
- "The Nazarene" novelist Sholem
- Hambletonian gait
- Newspapers, collectively
- Luxembourg's cont.
- Spiral-horned antelope
- Loch legend, in tabloids
- Enjoy Vail
- Trailblazer Boone
- Provoke, as with a dare
- Reese of "Touched by an Angel"
- Cruise stopovers
- Black-ink item
- Arctic floater
- Angelic ambience
- Syllables from Santa
- Grip, as an ice cube
- Slaughter in Cooperstown
- Anti-fraud agcy.

The crossword puzzle brought to you by:

SPORTS TELEVISION SCHEDULE

Saturday

10 a.m. 22/28 ESPN College Football Wisconsin Badgers at Illinois Fighting Illini from Memorial Stadium

12 p.m. 3/9 NBC Champions Tour Senior Players Championship presented by Constellation Energy: Final Round from Baltimore Country Club, Baltimore

1:30 p.m. 4/6 ABC College Football Regional Coverage - Teams TBA

7/11 CBS College Football Georgia Bulldogs at Tennessee Volunteers from Neyland Stadium, Knoxville, Tenn.

23/29 ESPN2 College Football Teams TBA

2 p.m. 22/28 ESPN NTRA Horse Racing First Lady Stakes/Champagne Stakes from Lexington, Ky.

30/27 FXSP College Football Arizona State Sun Devils at Washington State Cougars from Martin Stadium

4 p.m. 25/38 IND MLB Baseball American League Division Series Game #3 Arizona Diamondbacks at Chicago Cubs from Wrigley Field

5:30 p.m. 30/27 FXSP College Football Oklahoma State Cowboys at Texas A&M Aggies from Kyle Field

6 p.m. 4/6 ABC College Football Regional Coverage - Teams TBA

7/11 CBS College Football Florida Gators at LSU Tigers from Tiger Stadium, Baton Rouge, La.

23/29 ESPN2 College Football Cincinnati Bearcats at Rutgers Scarlet Knights from Rutgers Stadium

7:30 p.m. 25/38 IND MLB Baseball National League Division Series Game #3 Philadelphia Phillies at Colorado Rockies from Coors Field

Sunday

10:30 a.m. 23/29 ESPN2 NBA Basketball Toronto Raptors vs Lottomatica Roma from Rome, Italy

11 a.m. 7/11 CBS NFL Football Jacksonville Jaguars at Kansas City Chiefs from Arrowhead Stadium

28/40 TNT MLB Baseball National League Division Series Game #4 (If Necessary) Arizona Diamondbacks at Chicago Cubs from Wrigley Field

60/79 UNIV F'bol Liga

Mexicana AmÈrica jguilas at Toluca Diablos from Bambonera

12 p.m. 3/9 NBC Champions Tour Senior Players Championship presented by Constellation Energy: Final Round from Baltimore Country Club, Baltimore

1 p.m. 25/38 IND MLB Baseball American League Division Series Game #3 Boston Red Sox at Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim from Angel Stadium of Anaheim

1:30 p.m. 4/6 ABC College Football Regional Coverage - Teams TBA

2 p.m. 7/11 CBS NFL Football San Diego Chargers at Denver Broncos from INVESCO Field at Mile High

3 p.m. 23/29 ESPN2 Horse Racing Oak Tree Mile/ Ladyis Secret Handicap from Arcadia, Calif.

4:30 p.m. 25/38 IND MLB Baseball American League Division Series Game #3 Cleveland Indians at New York Yankees from Yankee Stadium

6 p.m. 4/6 ABC College Football Regional Coverage - Teams TBA

22/28 ESPN College Football New Mexico State Aggies vs Boise State Broncos from Bronco Stadium

6:15 p.m. 3/9 NBC Sunday Night Football Chicago Bears at Green Bay Packers from Lambeau Field, Green Bay, Wis.

8 p.m. 25/38 IND MLB Baseball National League Division Series Game #4 (If Necessary) Philadelphia Phillies at Colorado Rockies from Coors Field

Monday

4 p.m. 25/38 IND MLB Baseball American League Division Series Game #4 (If Necessary) Cleveland Indians at New York Yankees from Yankee Stadium

6:30 p.m. 22/28 ESPN Monday Night Football Dallas Cowboys vs Buffalo Bills from Ralph Wilson Stadium

7 p.m. 20/37 USA WWE Monday Night RAW WWE Monday Night Raw

7:30 p.m. 25/38 IND MLB Baseball American League Division Series Game #4 (If Necessary) Boston Red Sox at Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim from Angel Stadium of Anaheim

8 p.m. 20/37 USA WWE Monday Night RAW WWE Monday Night Raw

Tuesday

4:30 p.m. 25/38 IND MLB Baseball National League Division Series Game #5 (If Necessary) Colorado Rockies at Philadelphia Phillies from Citizens Bank Park

11 p.m. 22/28 ESPN SportsCenter from Bristol, Conn.

Wednesday

12:30 p.m. 23/29 ESPN2 NBA Basketball Preseason Game Boston Celtics vs Minnesota Timberwolves from London, England

3 p.m. 25/38 IND MLB Baseball American League Division Series Game #5 (If Necessary) New York Yankees at Cleveland Indians from Jacobs Field

6 p.m. 22/28 ESPN College Football Navy Midshipmen vs Pittsburgh Panthers from Heinz Field

6:30 p.m. 25/38 IND MLB Baseball American League Division Series Game #5 (If Necessary) Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim at Boston Red Sox from Fenway Park

Thursday

4 p.m. 23/29 ESPN2 NASCAR Busch Practice Charlotte

5 p.m. 23/29 ESPN2 NASCAR Nextel Cup Qualifying Charlotte

5:30 p.m. 22/28 ESPN College Football Florida State Seminoles vs Wake Forest Demon Deacons from Groves Stadium

6 p.m. 25/38 IND MLB Baseball 2007 National League Championship Series: Game 1 (Teams TBA)

7 p.m. 23/29 ESPN2 MLS Soccer CD Chivas USA at F.C. Dallas from Pizza Hut Park

Friday

2 p.m. 23/29 ESPN2 NASCAR Busch Qualifying Charlotte from Concord, N.C.

25/38 IND MLB Baseball 2007 National League Championship Series: Game 2 (Team TBA)

4 p.m. 23/29 ESPN2 NASCAR Nextel Cup Happy Hour from Charlotte, N.C.

6 p.m. 22/28 ESPN College Football Hawaii Warriors vs San Jose State Spartans from Spartan Stadium

23/29 ESPN2 NASCAR Busch Series Dollar General 300 from Lowe's Motor Speedway