

Co-op baseball team is explored

Written by Carol Pomeday
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Sheboygan Christian is interested in playing with CG-B to compete in CLC

Cedar-Belgium school officials are exploring the possibility of forming a cooperative boys' baseball team with Sheboygan Christian High School despite pleas from some players and parents to make changes in the coaching staff instead.

Athletic Director Dan Coopman told the School Board last week the district applied to the WIAA to form a co-op team, but was denied because it missed the June 2 deadline for applications.

"We were told we could have a team and play in the conference but couldn't participate in tournaments," Coopman said. "We're looking to appeal the decision because we're already included in the tournament so it wouldn't change anything."

Since Sheboygan Christian does not have a baseball field, Coopman said, Cedar-Grove-Belgium would be the host school and coordinate the program.

"I was told most of their players are from Oostburg and want to play here," he said.

Although parents and players were cautioned not to discuss personnel issues in a public meeting, parent Mike Ruppel said there would be no need for a co-op team if the school changed coaches.

Several players quit the team last season. When another player sustained a season-ending injury, there weren't enough players to continue and the team forfeited its last game.

Coopman said baseball coach Mike Johnson has until Oct. 27 to decide if he wants to continue coaching and address issues raised by students, parents and the administration.

Several parents said the players haven't had a chance to explain why they quit.

Even if there had been enough players to finish the season, Principal John Hocking said, most were freshmen or sophomores competing against juniors and seniors.

Fielding a co-op team may result in enough players to form junior varsity and varsity teams, Principal John Hocking said, allowing players to get more playing time against athletes their same size.

Board President Jim Lautenschlaeger said he objects to not being allowed to play in postseason tournaments.

"That's what happened this year. To me the postseason is out there to give a kid the opportunity to get to state," he said.

He said a co-op team would not have the same Rockets pride as a school team.

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"It's not a Cedar Grove-Belgium Rockets team. It's some kind of hybrid," he said.

Board member Chad Hoopman disagreed.

"I think there is no harm in co-oping. If you have 12 to 15 kids from our school and get five to six kids from Oostburg, you're assured of having junior varsity and varsity teams," he said. We can also go with our own team if we have enough players."

Board member Laura Schieffer said the School Board is aware of the issues.

The School Board will meet at 6:30 p.m. Monday, Oct. 25, to discuss the baseball program. After the public portion, the board will meet in closed session.