

Cancellation Causes PCL Controversy

The Poke Korner

Putnam County Vidette – January 27, 1977 – By Ron Pokorn

The postponement and later the cancellation of the Columbus Grove/Kalida basketball game, originally scheduled for January 18, and called off due to snowy, frigid weather, is beginning to reach storm-like proportions that could make this winter seem like a summer in the tropics.

It was mutually decided to postpone the game until a later date on Monday, January 17, of last week, 24 hours before the contest was to have been played. The consultation to set up a new game date involved Coach/Principal/Athletic Director Dick Kortokrax and Superintendent John Phillips of Kalida, and Coach Gary Jones, Athletic Director Leroy Reed and Superintendent Charles Breeden from Columbus Grove.

Each school had only one other game scheduled for that week. The Wildcats were slated to battle Miller City in a non-league match, while Grove was to be pitted against Northwest Conference foe, Upper Scioto Valley, with both games designed for Friday night, January 21.

Kortokrax opted for a Wednesday, January 19 game, but Grove did not have school that day and the Bulldog hierarchy understandably refused to heat the gymnasium for a basketball game. Kortokrax then offered to play on Saturday, January 22, but Grove again declined for the same reason.

The gentlemen from Grove wanted to hold the game Wednesday, January 26, of this week, but Kortokrax already had two games scheduled – Pandora-Gilboa on Tuesday, January 25, and North Baltimore on Friday, January 28 – so another impasse developed.

Sometime during the morning hours of Tuesday, January 18, Breeden received permission to play the game the following Saturday, January 22, a day that Kalida had wanted earlier in the week. The arrangement fell through; however, when Kortokrax said the late notice would not give him enough time to prepare his club for the game. It was at this time that the two school establishments decided to permanently cancel the game.

On Friday, January 21, while Grove and Kalida were busy collecting victories, Continental at that time undefeated in Putnam County League play, was felled by Fort Jennings. The Conti loss made the possibility for a two-way tie for the league crown very real.

If the game remains cancelled, and if Continental and Kalida finish their respective PCL schedule with one loss each, it would seem that the Grove-Kalida match must be played. The Pirates would have a record of 6-1 while Kalida would be one-half game out of first place at 5-1. The contest beckons to be held, if only to determine who the PCL champion, or champions, are.

Kortokrax wants the game to be rescheduled for some time during the final weeks of the season, but it is unlikely that Grove will agree to that scheme. The Bulldogs have a heavy schedule during those weeks and a game then will mean Grove would have to play three games in one week.

Reed, the athletic director for Columbus Grove, stated that he had expected to hear from someone at Kalida after the Conti loss, but that no contact was made.

Breeden, Grove's superintendent, who along with Philips at Kalida, has the final say as to when the game will be played, if at all, stated that the game is irrevocably cancelled as far as he is concerned. According to Breeden, he is acting on advice from Mack Schaffer, a member of the State School Board.

Kortokrax, meanwhile, has been in conference with Marvin Walls, PCL Commissioner. The Kalida coach is hoping that Walls can step in after the results of Tuesday night's game were known, and assist in scheduling a new game date.

Walls described his job as one of a diplomat who must find a mutually suitable date to play the game, but according to the rules of the Ohio High School Athletic Association, the two schools' superintendents and principals can block any attempt to hold the contest. Those four men have the last word in the matter.

Walls stated that the major difficulty in rescheduling the game is that one of the teams will have three games in one week, a situation that may kill any chance of a make-up before it even gets started. If the game is played, it will have to be on a Wednesday, because, as Walls said, one of the squads has a Tuesday night game every week, and either one or the other plays on Friday or Saturday of each week until the end of the season.

Columbus Grove – the Bulldogs as a team - wants to play the game. They feel they are improving to the point that a win over Kalida would not be as remote a possibility as it might seem. Kalida's Wildcats want to play the game, looking for the second consecutive share in the PCL crown. Marvin Walls stated that "the game has to be played."

We now add our feelings to the matter by expressing the hope that the contest will be played. It must be held sometime, anytime. It would be unfair to the players, coaches and population of the two villages involved if administration squabbles prevent the playing of this rivalry which carries with it so much weight this year.

The game was rescheduled and played after the regular season on February 22, with CG defeating Kalida. Grove also defeated Miller City on February 26 to knock MC out of the hunt. The PCL race ended with Kalida, Continental and FJ tied with 5-2 records.

The last scheduled game that year was Fort Jennings and Minster on February 27. The regular season was supposed to end on February 19, but due to the extreme weather conditions, it was extended. The first tournament game was pushed back to March 1!

While this "controversy" 40 years ago seemed difficult to solve, under today's standards, it wouldn't have been a problem. Columbus Grove's reluctance to play on a non-school day is a regular practice today. Columbus Grove and Kalida's not wanting to play three games in a week is a norm today with the 22-game season schedule.