

INTER-COUNTY CONFERENCE HISTORY

The Inter-County Conference was formed as a football league for schools with an enrollment of 300 or fewer students in the upper 3 grades back in 1937. It was an outgrowth of a league that played in Cambria and Westmoreland Counties in 1936 (Champion was Bolivar) and 1937 (Champion was Beaverdale) that looked to expand and give itself a name at a meeting held on December 27, 1937, at the Altoona YMCA.

With Edward R. Stover of Southmont serving as the first President, Charles R. Hetrick of Bellwood as the Vice-President, and John M. Urban of Beaverdale as the Secretary/Treasurer, the league named itself the Inter-County Conference and launched play in 1938 with 11 member schools. These schools included: Beaverdale, Bolivar, Broad Top Twp., BellwoodAntis, Carrolltown, Claysburg, Dale, Elders-Ridge, Roaring Spring, Saxton-Liberty, and Southmont.

Annual League dues were \$2.50 and an annual meeting followed by a league banquet, a staple in the league forever, was begun with the first meeting/Awards banquet being held at the LaFinke Hotel in Duncansville on Nov. 29, 1938.

The President and Vice-President, as they do today, rotated yearly. John M. Urban from Beaverdale was the Secretary-Treasurer from 1938-1951 and was a key cog in the formidable years of the league. With the rotation of the chief officers, the Secretary-Treasurer became, and still is, the stabilizing and often driving force in league leadership. Mr. Urban certainly fits that bill as he was a visionary and continued to be a driving force in the league even after giving up the Secretary/Treasurer position while continuing as the Principal at Beaverdale.

Of the original members only Claysburg, Bellwood, and Tussey Mountain (jointure of Broad Top Twp., Saxton-Liberty, and Robertsdale who joined a year later in 1939) remain. Replogle (now part of the Northern Bedford jointure) and Cherrytree from Indiana County also joined along with Robertsdale in 1939. Cherrytree, Bolivar, Elders Ridge, and Carrolltown left after the 1939 season but South Fork joined in 1940 followed by Richland Twp., Franklin Boro, and Williamsburg in 1941 to keep the league in the 10-12 teams range.

In 1945, under the leadership of John Urban, the league revised to an East-West format at a special April 16, 1945 meeting. A Championship game would be played each year and from 1945-1959 the Champions from each section would meet in mid to late November for the ICC title before some huge crowds. 3,267 witnessed Beaverdale's 14-7 win over Bellwood Antis at Hollidaysburg in 1951. The game also endured some difficult weather conditions. With the Western section growing as Everett, Moshannon, and Juniata Valley entered and the East shrinking due to withdrawals and mergers, a push was put forth to save the East-West alignment by adding Patton, Lilly, Nanty Glo, Conemaugh-East Taylor, John Carroll, HastingsElder, and Gallitzin in 1953 and 1954.

During this era, the annual league meeting and banquet, after having floated around the Altoona area for a few years, settled into the Summit Country Club in Cresson from 1947-1957. The 1942 meeting/banquet was canceled due to gas rationing and everything was handled via mail. 1958

saw the venue change to the Eldon Inn in Roaring Spring for a few years and Erculiani's in Gallitzin also hosted. After one year at the Huntingdon Elks in 1966 the annual meeting/banquet found a home at Louie's Coral Lounge in 1967.

Meanwhile, 1960 brought reorganization by enrollment to the league. Those with 350 or more students would be in Group A while the smaller member schools were in Group B. Enrollments were submitted yearly to the Secretary-Treasurer for alignment. The Secretary-Treasurer position floated among 3 people after Urban gave it up in 1951 until Galen P. Dively of Claysburg took over in 1964. Dively would serve as league Secretary-Treasurer for 23 years until 1986.

The new alignment saw Cambria Hts, Central, Everett, Mo Valley, Tussey Mt., and Chestnut Ridge make up Group A. Group B had original members Beaverdale, Claysburg, South Fork, and Bellwood as well as Southern Huntingdon, Williamsburg, Northern Bedford, Juniata Valley, Gallitzin, Lilly-Washington, Nanty Glo (Later Blacklick Valley) and Franklin.

Slowly the league's geography would move East and North. Several of the Western schools would merge. Lilly and Gallitzin would join with Cresson to form Penn Cambria, as an example. Franklin, South Fork, and Beaverdale left after the initial 1960 season. West Branch would join in 1962, BCIJ (soon to be Glendale) in 1963, Bucktail, Penns Valley, Portage and Kishacoquillas came in in the early 70's followed by Curwensville in 1975, and Mount Union in 1978.

The league remained pretty stable in the 1980s and continued to have its annual meeting/banquet at Louie's Lounge. By this time most of the banquets were held on Thanksgiving eve, a tradition that has stuck with the league, with a few being held the Tuesday prior to Thanksgiving.

The League celebrated its 50th year at the 1987 Meeting/Banquet at Louie's Lounge. Louie's ended a 20 year run as the host for the annual fete in 1989 when it moved to the Bullpen in Tyrone.

In the early 1990s, there was more change. 1991 through 2007 saw a very turbulent time for the league. The league nearly dissolved in 2002-03. There were constant changes trying to balance enrollment issues and the vast geography of the conference. Twice during this time period the league went to a 3-division format to try and appease everyone and satisfy scheduling concerns.

In the summer of 2000, there was talk of a merger of the Juniata Valley and Sideling Hill Leagues under the umbrella of the Inter-County Conference in an effort to form an all-sports conference which had gained popularity. Jeff Batzel had taken over as the league's Secretary-Treasurer by this time and he was an advocate of the all-sports concept and called all the parties together for a summer meeting. After much discussion, the proposed merger failed in a close vote but it was a sign of things to come.

Another change that came about in the early 90's was that the business meeting, which had become a longer event was moved to two weeks prior to the banquet to allow for the time necessary to conduct league business in those contentious times. While Dave's Dream in Hollidaysburg

provided the venue for the business meeting, the Bullpen in Tyrone continued to host the Thanksgiving eve banquet through the mid-2000s. The Casino in Altoona took over hosting the banquet for several years with the Old Canal Inn in Hollidaysburg hosting the league meeting prior to the banquet.

The turbulent times ended in 2007 when finally, there was enough momentum to build an all-sports conference that 16 members of the JVL and SHL finally agreed on an all-sports merger. 12 of the schools were long-standing football-playing schools. 4 Fulton County schools, members of the SHL, were added for the other sports. In the early 2000s, at various times and for various reasons, Curwensville, Bald Eagle Nittany, Penns Valley, Chestnut Ridge, and Bishop Guilfoyle had left the conference and the time was right for an all-sports league.

Although the all-sports concept presented challenges and had its share of growing pains, it was a saving grace for the fledgling football league that was going through a multitude of problems.

The schools have been stable in the league since the all-sports concept's inception, something that never held true throughout the history of the league prior to 2007. 14 sports crown champions in a North-South format that aligns very closely to the old JVL (North) and SHL (South) with the only change coming from Southern Huntingdon's move from the North to the South division just a few years into the all-sports league start.