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ASHEBORO - Being surprised is different from being upset.

Most of the administrators of the eight high schools in Randolph County said they were certainly surprised when the first draft of the new realignment for the 2025-2029 period was released by the NCHSAA Wednesday morning. For the first time, the NCHSAA will have member schools divided into eight classifications with approximately 60 schools in the 1A through 7A divisions and 32 in 8A.

And there were surprises. Boy, were there surprises.

The current members of the Piedmont Athletic Conference, a league that features seven county schools, would be split up and sent to three different leagues, including a pair of split conferences. One 3A conference which is not split includes Providence Grove, Trinity and Wheatmore, which would be joined by East Davidson, West Davidson and Thomasville.

Needless to say, all three local athletic directors are thrilled with the change.

Eastern Randolph (3A), Southwestern Randolph (4A) and Uwharrie Charter Academy (4A) would join a split 3A/4A league along with North Moore (3A), Northwood (3A), Carrboro (4A) and Jordan-Matthews (4A).

Randleman (4A) was put into a split 4A/5A league with Central Davidson (4A), Ledford (4A), Lexington (4A), High Point Andrews (4A), High Point Central (5A) and Montgomery Central (5A).

Asheboro, the only 6A team in the county, would join a 5A/6A split conference with Eastern Guilford (6A), Northern Guilford (6A), Southeast Guilford (6A), Northeast Guilford (5A) and Southern Guilford (5A).

For WHS, THS and PG, which were looking to get out of but were preparing to be a part of a very similar league featuring all seven county schools, the changes were welcomed.

"We're pretty happy with it," said THS Athletic Director Robert Mitchell. "I like the fact that we are in a conference of strictly 3A teams instead of splitting and having to go through what you have to go through with a split conference. I really didn't put a whole lot of stock into what was being said and projections. We took a wait-and-see approach. I talked to most of the coaches and most everyone is happy. We're with schools we can compete with and we get along with."



WHS Athletic Director Andrew Davis was happy with the initial draft.

"More surprised than anything," he said. "We just assumed along with everyone else we would be in a split 3A/4A conference and it would look like what we had prior. From a competitive standpoint, being in a strictly 3A conference is a plus. I don't see how any of the six teams in our projected conference can complain. Everyone here is hoping it stays the same."

PG Athletic Director Cody Moran was surprised and pleased with the first draft.

"I think I was about as surprised as a lot of other schools were," he said. "You go to all the forum boards and see those and you know there's no way they can do that. But it looks like they did. For us, looking at where we were in the conference, you always want to win your conference and now we have a legitimate shot in every sport. The issue I see talking to some people is our gates might be a little lower."

UCA Athletic Director David Hayes said he likes the fact that the Eagles will retain current conference mates ER and SWR while branching out to face new foes.

"It's interesting," Hayes said. "I just assumed they would try and keep a pretty similar conference with the Randolph County teams. I'm not saying I wanted that or didn't want that. We'll be playing teams I don't have a lot of experience with as a coach as I've had in the past. I will say it's a fresh take. We've played the same people for a pretty long time and we'll still play some. It's nice to have a fresh take, but we're still going to wait and see the final."

Schools have about a month for appeals before a final realignment plan is implemented.

"You're not going to make everyone happy," Hayes said.

Eastern Randolph Athletic Director Foster Cates seemed happy.

"I thought they did a real good job and put a lot of time into it," Cates said. "I didn't think there would be three different conferences for the Randolph County schools. They have been playing the same kids since they were four-years old and some people say that's great. We'll be playing more teams we haven't played. There's more who play sports than those right here beside us."

SWR Athletic Director Chris Chapman said he's going to do more research.

"We've been looking at it since it came out, looking at a lot of things," Chapman said. "They are going to send out (appeal) forms, so we'll cross that bridge when we come to it. We have time to look at it more and figure out what's best for our school."

Chapman said he was surprised about a couple of the proposed conference members.

"We're not surprised about Jordan-Matthews, North Moore, Eastern, but those two schools never came to mind," he said about Northwood and Carrboro. "A little concerned about the travel. How early teams will have to leave and how late they will get back during the week."

Randleman is leaving the comfort of a county league and will be the only Randolph County school in its new proposed conference. RHS Athletic Director Jake Smith said that would be fine.

"We're going to play some good opponents and play good non conference opponents, we'll still get to play them," Smith said. "In a way, it's good to play different people, meet different teams. We'll go practice and compete in whatever conference we're in from 1A to 8A."

The Blue Comets have been linked with teams from Alamance County, Forsyth County, Davidson County and Guilford County. The proposed conference features five Guilford County schools and AHS.

AHS Athletic Director Wes Berrier said the proposed league would suit Asheboro fine.

"All of us, myself, (Principal Dr. Ryan Moody), (Assistant AD Owen George), Calvin (Brown), we like it," Berrier said. "It will be competitive in football. We definitely turned the corner this past year and it will only get better. All the way around, basketball, baseball, it will be competitive."