

High school leaders fear Friday college football



Administrators fear prep tradition could be in danger.

By **LEE ROBERTS**
Assistant Sports Editor

Charles Adams, executive director of the North Carolina High School Athletic Association, is worried.

"Telecasting college football on Friday nights could do all kinds of harm to high school athletic programs," Adams said. "High school athletic programs depend tremendously on the gate receipts of their football games."

North Carolina high schools could lose 40 to 60 percent of their revenues if college football is telecast on Friday nights, a time traditionally reserved for high school football, Adams said.

High schools are protected during this, the 1984 season, due to a resolution passed at last summer's NCAA meetings prohibiting simultaneous Friday evening college football telecasts. But next season, and those that follow, hold many questions for high school athletic programs throughout the country and for the 323 high school football programs in North Carolina.

"The resolution applies only to 1984," Adams said. "We at the NCHSAA are going to request the NCAA during their meetings in January to sponsor an amendment that would permanently prohibit telecasts on Friday nights. If they don't agree, it could wipe us out."

High schools had 32 years of written protection from the NCAA, dating back to the 1952 NCAA football TV plan. That plan provided protection by stating that no NCAA member could be involved on television on Friday nights during the traditional high school football season — the first Friday in September through the last Friday in November. But the Supreme

Court ruled this summer in a suit brought against the NCAA by College Football Association members Georgia and Oklahoma that the NCAA has no power to restrict colleges from working out their own TV deals.

So, if NCAA members do not agree to adopt a resolution banning Friday night telecasts, many high schools could end up having to drop their football programs, or making many cuts in their athletic programs.

Warren Brown, assistant director of the National Federation of State High School Athletic Associations, seemed a bit more optimistic about the colleges banning Friday night TV.

"At the NCAA meetings last July, they voted unanimously to ban Friday night telecasts this season, so I don't see them changing their stance in the future," Brown said. "However, the leadership of the CFA (of which North Carolina is a member) is much more sensitive to money than it is to the high schools' plight."

If the colleges do not agree to ban Friday night telecasts, the members of the NCHSAA are not quite sure what to do. "We would prefer an enforceable NCAA policy over legislation," Adams said. "Right now, we are writing all the college presidents in North Carolina to get support in adoption of the resolution to keep Friday nights for high school."

Bill Hodgkin, head football coach at nearby Chapel Hill High School and a member of the athletic department, has seen the NCAA deal trample on ground that is sacred to high school athletics before.

"This could be just like college basketball," Hodgkin said. "For years, Tuesday and Friday even-

ings were generally regarded as the nights that high schools played basketball, and it was just an accepted thing that the colleges did not televise their basketball games on those nights. But then they started doing it a little at a time, and now colleges are televised all the time."

Adams agreed, noting that the colleges would tell the NCHSAA it was a one-time thing. "If we let them say 'let us telecast just this once' like they did with basketball, there's no way we'll be able to stop it. We do have to worry about this."

UNC athletic director John Swofford said that televising football on Fridays would be a big mistake.

"It would be terribly insensitive to high school programs, and a gross wrong-doing to high school football," Swofford said. "I don't see an inclination for UNC to televise on Friday nights."

Swofford said that he thought it was a "very reasonable" possibility that the NCAA would adopt a permanent resolution banning college football telecasts on Friday nights.

"I think the sound football programs will survive," Hodgkin said, "but I think we'll lose that marginal fan, the one who would rather stay at home on a Friday if he hears that two top-ranked college teams will be playing on TV."

"I would think that the colleges will start televising Friday nights if they can. In a way, I don't blame them. Football is their main revenue sport just like ours is. They've got to survive, but we do, too."

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