

OFF-SEASON NEWS

CIAA axes football championship game

It's no secret that the CIAA Football Championship hasn't done well at the gate. Fact is, the game has been a financial disappointment. For that reason, the league's Board of Directors has decided to padlock the '91 title game and throw away the key.

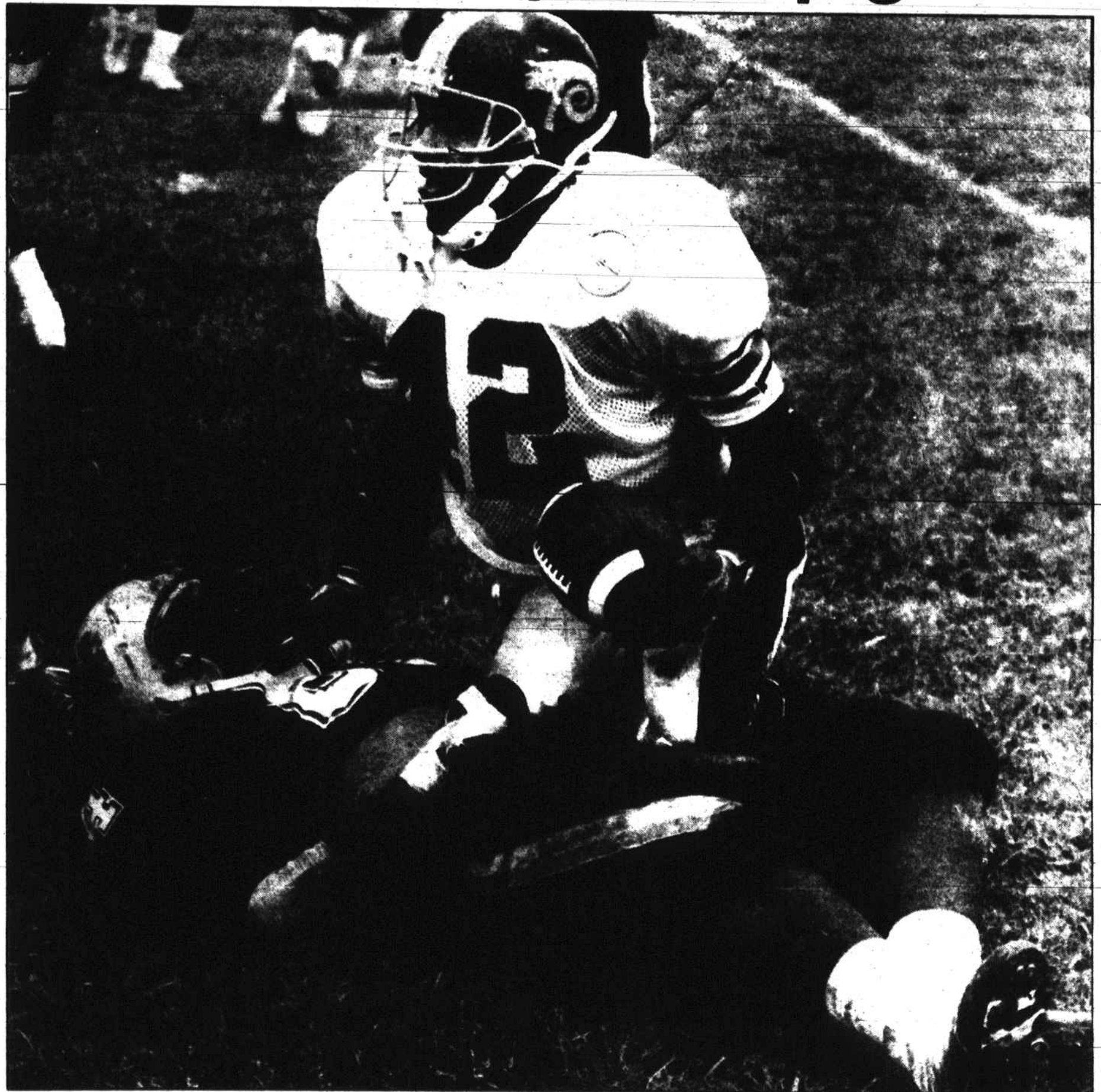
"Given the game's past attendance history, introducing the R.I.P. treatment doesn't sound like such a bad idea. But the timing leaves much to be desired. The CIAA's board, composed of college presidents around the conference, made its decision just prior to the CIAA Spring Meetings in May. That leaves little time for league schools to make scheduling adjustments."

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It seems that the board really didn't consider how the timing of their decision would adversely affect CIAA schools.

Here's the deal and why more than a few league coaches feel that they are being short changed as a result of the board's declaration.

The NCAA stipulates that a school can play a maximum of 11 regular season games. Under the previous CIAA system, conference schools couldn't schedule more than 10 regular season games without being out of compliance with NCAA regulations. That's because the CIAA championship counted as the



For '91, no CIAA team will have exclusive bragging rights as the league champions in football. The division winners will share the title this time around. Photo by Max Dunhill

11th game of the regular season whether your school actually made it to the championship game or not.

But what really irks some coaches is that the late decision doesn't allow them sufficient time to schedule an 11th game to replace the title game that won't be played. Most football schedules are set before May, some as early as January. Waiting so late, prohibits schools from being able to find another opponent to complete their schedule. Almost all schools have already contractually committed themselves by that time of year.

And besides, teams who play for the title haven't received much money for playing in the game anyway. Had this decision been made much sooner, say

last December, schools would have been in a better position to get their 11th game and earn some dollars for their programs.

The way things stand now, schools don't get to play for a championship and neither do they get the chance to bring in more bucks. It's no wonder that coaches believe they're being handed the short end of the stick.

But hold on a minute. There has been talk that conference coaches were putting together a counterproposal designed to persuade the board to reconsider its position and allow this year's game to be played. Whether or not the board will meet to rethink this matter was unknown at presstime.

Opinion around the league is divided as to what will eventually occur. Some feel the present decision will stand, while others are confident that the title game will be revived for this year at least.

This year the league will have co-champions, meaning that the winners of the Northern Division and Southern Division will have to share the throne.

Within the next two years, though, that arrangement is expected to change. The league has already started to put together the scheduling mechanisms that would set up a seven or eight team round robin designed to produce a singular champion.

— Dan Wesley