

San Mateo shelves plan to leave CCS

Times Tribune staff

Once again, the possibility that San Mateo County's public high schools might secede from the Central Coast Section to form their own section for athletics has been placed on the backburner.

Last week, the possibility — which has been discussed and favored by several San Mateo County principals for more than three years — had seemed a step closer to reality. This week, however, the potential secession again reverted to a "feasibility study" — just as it had in 1984, when principals from the Peninsula Athletic League and North Peninsula League schools met to discuss such a split.

Last week, a letter was read at a CCS Board of Managers meeting (and was delivered at the California Interscholastic Federation's headquarters in Fullerton) expressing the intention of schools in three districts to secede from the CCS. The letter was signed by the superintendents of the San Mateo, South San Francisco and Jefferson districts, with the surprise support of the CCS.

However, two of the county's five high school districts — the Sequoia and Cabrillo districts — remain unsupportive of the idea, which presented a potential stumbling block for CIF approval of the concept. The CIF, the body that governs high school sports in this state, is divided into 10 sections — one of which is the CCS, which includes 118 schools. The Sequoia district includes four high schools and the Cabrillo district only one (Half Moon Bay), but, in effect, only three of the county's five districts were ready to go ahead with the secession.

This week, however, Floyd Gonella, Superintendent of the Jefferson Union High School District, sent another letter to the CIF, this time declaring only that a feasibility study would be made of the possibility of secession before the 1986-87 school year. No secession will take place before the 1985-86 school year, if ever.

The Federated Council, the ruling body of the CIF, is meeting today and Saturday in Oakland and presumably would have been forced to respond to the initiative of the three San Mateo County districts had the superintendents not backed off and sent Gonella's letter.

The school superintendents from all five districts met April 24 to discuss the feasibility of a separate section, but administrators from the Sequoia and Cabrillo districts have said they need further evidence of financial feasibility.

The CCS stretches from San Francisco (where it includes only Riordan, Sacred Heart and St. Ignatius of the West Catholic Athletic League) to King City. San Mateo County officials often have felt that Santa Clara County, which has a larger population and consequently has more schools in the CCS, has dominated section officials' decision-making policies. Some superintendents also have taken exception to the travel costs associated with playing schools in the San Jose area.

Only 12 CCS schools were involved in the three San Mateo County districts' support of a separate county section. The Sequoia district has four schools in the PAL — Carlmont, Menlo-Atherton, Sequoia and Woodside — while the Cabrillo district has only one high school — Half Moon Bay, an NPL member. A separate San Mateo County section, even if it included those five schools, would be the third-smallest in the state, behind the San Francisco and Oakland sections.

Had the CIF's Federated Council been forced to respond to the proposed secession this weekend and denied the split, the schools would have been faced with the choice of seceding from CIF.