

Switch from 8-man to 6-man football right move for Mead

BY WYATT ENGEL

Ten years ago, a school board meeting was held... The decision of whether to declare six-man or eight-man football proved to be highly controversial.

As emotions flared in the meeting room, the meeting concluded with a verdict of eight-man football for the near future. The issue was solved... until now.

A similar meeting was held on Nov. 10, 2025, at which the Mead Board of Education discussed switching to six-man football.

Community members offered many different opinions regarding the switch. Some thought that Mead should play six-man, while others felt that they should opt down to the newly created Division 3 eight-man class.

Switching to six-man football is in the best interest of both Mead's football team and its fans.

After several years of making the playoffs, the number of participants in Raider football is at its lowest point in recent history. With six graduating starters, the 2026 team will be very young and inexperienced.

In addition to Mead's youth, many players weigh less than 130 pounds. This increases the risk of injury when one of these smaller players is tackled by opponents who may weigh as much as 250 pounds.

With only six players on the field, the team is less likely to be forced to play smaller athletes who are at greater risk of being injured by opponents twice their size.

One of the biggest downsides of switching to six-man is playoff eligibility. According to the NSAA Football Manual, "Schools playing football and having a three-grade BOY enrollment in excess of 27 are required to play 8-man football in order to be eligible for the State Football Playoffs. If such schools choose to play 6-man football, they will not be eligible for the State Football Playoffs."

Mead narrowly misses this window with 30 boys in the upcoming freshmen, sophomore and junior classes. The problem is that out of the 30 boys, only 15 may decide to play football.

To play six-man football, the team would have to opt down, losing eligibility for the playoffs.

In addition, with only around 15 players, effective eight-man practices would be nearly impossible. The team wouldn't be able to experience live looks in practice, which would make it increasingly difficult to prepare for games.

Another issue is that even if the Raiders were in eight-man football and were eligible for the playoffs, they most likely wouldn't even make it to the playoffs without forfeiting a game.

In Nebraska, if a high school team is

forced to forfeit a game, they lose all playoff eligibility.

Consequently, with low numbers and a high risk of injuries, six-man football is the best option.

Some people say that six-man football is an entirely different game from eight-man football; however, the two are much more similar than they appear.

According to granttribute.com, "6-man football was invented in Nebraska. Nearly 90 years ago, 6-man football had its start, and it was started by a teacher at Chester High School."

While six-man football closely resembles eight-man football in terms of field dimensions, it differs in key aspects, including the number of players, receiver eligibility and scoring rules. In addition, first downs are 15 yards from the line of scrimmage instead of 10.

Also, scoring in six-man football differs in several ways. Field goals are worth four points instead of three, extra-point kicks are worth two points, and what would be a two-point conversion in eight-man football is worth only one point.

Despite these differences, six-man football remains very similar to eight-man football, so transitioning between the two will not be difficult for the Raiders.

All things considered, six-man football is by far the best option for Mead's football program in the near future.

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