



## Breaking the Tie

by Jeremy Holaday, KSHSAA staff

The buzzer has sounded and the official holds the ball over his head signaling the game is over, but the scoreboard reveals an even score? Brice Durbin, former Executive Director for the KSHSAA, recalls a football playoff game in 1970 where this scenario involving Shawnee Mission North High School came into play. “The end of regulation came and we still had a tie ballgame,” said Durbin. The procedure for determining a winner at the time involved calculations of first downs, yardage gained, and total number of penetrations inside the 5, 10, and 20-yard lines. A process that would take up to 20 minutes to determine the winner resulting in fans leaving the field not knowing who was moving to the next level of the then 5A playoffs.

“To this day I can still remember the commotion and ruckus, the fans were going crazy, they wanted to know the winner,” Durbin remembered.

Durbin and the KSHSAA Board of Directors had just implemented football state playoffs a year earlier in 1969, ironically the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of high school football in Kansas. The first overtime game came that year in an 8-man contest between Lucas and Lecompton. Lucas won the playoff game 31-30 because their number of penetrations inside the 5-yard line tallied more than Lecompton. But it is the Shawnee Mission North game that really started to shift the way of thinking towards overtime rules. Durbin knew that something had to be implemented, but what? On a national level no one really had overtime procedures differing from the Kansas approach. Collegiate and professional football ended games with a tie and it didn’t seem to Durbin it would change soon.

Assistant Executive Director Nelson Hartman, recalled thinking of procedures similar to whichever team had the most first downs in the game would be dubbed the winner. The realization of fast teams scoring on one or two plays versus a running team using eighth or nine plays to score would lead to an advantage, scratching that idea quickly. Ideas were tossed around with no breakthrough coming forth.

A three and half-hour drive might take credit to the final solution for an overtime procedure and ultimately changing the game of football nationwide. It was the drive from Pratt, Kansas to Topeka after a basketball rules meeting the winter of 1970 that Durbin, with the Shawnee Mission North game still fresh on his mind, came up with the idea for a 10-yard line overtime system.

Hartman commented that the 10-yard line system was the best resemblance of what the game reflects and that is what Durbin and Hartman wanted. At the result of an even score after four quarters, each team would get four downs to score from the 10-yard line. If the score

remain tied, each team would line up and repeat the process until a winner prevail. All game rules would be identical to the four quarters proceeding the overtime period. From the 10-yard line, player safety and fatigue was a minimal issue.

The KSHSAA Board of Directors approved the overtime procedure and it was implemented in the 1971 football season. In the first year of implementation 70 games went into overtime with 46 of those games being decided in the first overtime. Two extra periods decided 19 games, three overtimes decided one game, four overtimes in three games and five overtimes in one game.

The system worked well and was reviewed positively by the majority of state's coaches and administrators. So, Durbin and Hartman took the system to the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) at the annual meeting and asked to have the overtime system adopted by the nation. The NFHS approved giving state associations the option of using the overtime system for two years. When those two years were up Kansas again asked for the overtime system to become a permanent option for state associations use, and the NFHS approved.

In subsequent years, the NFL and later collegiate football, began to develop their own overtime rules patterned after the Kansas Plan implemented in 1970. Collegiate officials often contacted Durbin when writing their overtime procedure. "When college football came to me with recommendations I advised them to move their starting spot to the 25-yard line because of their ability to specialize in kicking the ball," said Durbin.

The impact the 10-yard line system made on football across the nation at different levels was major. "I would say our overtime system ranks right up there with Knute Rockne's invention of the forward pass in regards to the impact it has had on football," said Hartman.

The NFL adopted their original sudden-death overtime rule in 1974 and college football implemented their overtime rule in 1996.

To this day if you look in a NFHS Football Rules Book you will find the often referred to "Kansas Plan" in regards to rule 3-1-1 for adoption of overtime rules.

So when the buzzer sounds at your local high school's football game this fall and the score is tied, sit back order another soda and enjoy another period of football.