

Baltimore Catholic League adds John Carroll, Mount Carmel

The Baltimore Catholic League, which has lost two marquee programs over the last two years, announced Aug. 25 the addition of two new members, giving the fabled boys' basketball league a new lease on life.

John Carroll, which competes with five of the six existing BCL members in the Maryland Interscholastic Athletic Association Conference, will join the league immediately, participating in the 2010-11 regular season and tournament.

Mount Carmel, a member of the MIAA B Conference, will play in the 2011 BCL tournament, with plans to move to the A Conference and join the BCL full-time in 2011-12.

"I'm delighted with the addition of two outstanding institutions," said BCL commissioner Jack Degele. "We lost two long-standing members over the last two years and to be able to replace them this quickly with quality schools is a blessing."

Founded in 1972, the BCL will celebrate its 40th anniversary during the upcoming season, but it is an anniversary it almost didn't reach.

In the summer of 2009, the BCL lost one of its charter members, as Towson Catholic. Days after the 2009-10 BCL tournament concluded, the Archdiocese of Baltimore announced that Cardinal Gibbons would also shut down.

The loss of TC triggered conversations about closing down the BCL. School heads were no longer convinced of the necessity for two post-season tournaments (A Conference, then BCL), and they were not fond of Sunday games, a BCL tradition.

After the loss of Gibbons, there was increased sentiment to relegate the BCL, which also includes Archbishop Spalding, Calvert Hall, Loyola Blakefield, Mount St. Joseph, St. Frances Academy and St. Maria Goretti in Hagerstown, to the history books.

In the end, however, compromises were reached. Yielding to the wishes of

administrators, the league will no longer schedule Sunday games.

The 2010-11 BCL tournament is tentatively scheduled for the weekend of March 3-6, two weeks after the scheduled conclusion of the MIAA A Conference playoffs. In the past, the two events bumped dangerously close to each other, especially when weather caused postponements.

Another addition will be a service day, some time between the two tournaments. The yet to be determined event will feature players from all BCL teams, in uniform, performing some form of community service.

Last year, the BCL began accepting nominations for its inaugural Hall of Fame class. The first enshrinement was being targeted for this year, but those plans stalled while the league went through its reorganization. According to Degele, planning for the Hall of Fame will soon resume.

John Carroll is led by head coach Tony Martin who led Archbishop Spalding to BCL prominence in the mid-1990s. He also worked as an assistant at both Gibbons and Mount St. Joe. Martin is entering his sixth season at John Carroll, where he took over a program that was winless in 2004-05. Two years later the Patriots set a school record with 28 wins.

Tom Rose has done nothing but win at Mount Carmel. He was hired prior to the 2002-03 season and won the MIAA C Conference crown two years later. His club then moved to the B Conference and won two titles in three trips to the league championship game over the last five seasons.

"We're honored to have the opportunity to compete in this prestigious league and tournament," said Mount Carmel athletic director Mike Naunton. "The history of the legendary coaches and players is very lengthy. We're looking forward to be part of the BCL tradition for years to come."

Courtesy varsitysportsnetwork.com.