

DAC

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Sullivan and Calais, the latter a former longtime DAC staple, with both also holding dual membership in both conferences.

“My rationale at the time was that the DAC was going to dissolve, so to protect programming and opportunities for kids at Machias was why I sought out the PVC,” said Machias principal and athletic administrator Brian Leavitt.

“The willingness of the PVC and the Aroostook League to take these teams in and meet their needs has really solidified the DAC.”

A declining conference

The Downeast Athletic Conference is believed to trace its roots to the early 1970s when consolidation of many of Maine’s smaller schools reshaped the state’s interscholastic sports landscape.

The DAC began as an association of all eight Washington County high schools at the time: Class C programs Calais, Narraguagus and Washington Academy of East Machias, Shead and Woodland.

All represented small, hardworking towns founded in ocean harvests or working the woods, communities where few things have sparked more emotion than the fate of the local high school sports teams — particularly in basketball.

Virtually every DAC school has taken its turn in creating local legends, beginning with Jonesport-Beals’ schoolboy basketball dynasty of the early and mid-1970s and continuing through only slightly less periods of dominance by both the boys and girls programs at Calais.

But as the region’s population aged and student enrollments began to wane, some fragility within the DAC was exposed.

Washington Academy, an independent school that attracts international students, was an enrollment exception. By the mid-2000s the Raiders had moved up to Class B in many sports and added



Woodland’s Drew Hayward (4) talks to teammates Alex Morrison (left), Luke McDonald and Gavin Gardner before the start of an inning against Bangor Christian during their baseball game recently at the University of Maine in Orono.

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football and swimming, two activities not offered by the DAC.

WA subsequently left the DAC beginning with the 2008-2009 season and joined the Class B-rich Penobscot Valley Conference.

That left Calais and Narraguagus as the lone Class C programs in the DAC, and even they were exploring moves that would provide them additional Class C opponents. That prompted a meeting in early 2008 to discuss the conference’s future.

“It would be a darn shame for us to lose any more [teams],” Shead athletic director Bob Davis said in the Jan. 11, 2008, edition of the Quoddy Tides, an Eastport-based newspaper.

But two years later, Lubec closed its high school, leaving the DAC with just six schools.

Calais was the next to leave the DAC, initially scheduling more out-of-conference Class C games and eventually joining WA in the PVC. The Blue Devils still scheduled some DAC foes, particularly Narraguagus and Woodland, but the conference

survivors were tasked to travel great distances to fill their schedules against teams in other parts of the state with similar scheduling dilemmas, such as Temple Academy of Waterville, Highview Christian of Charleston and Greenville.

And three games a season against conference foes became even more common.

“It’s been very difficult, no question,” said Theriault.

Making their moves

Four of those five schools seriously looked elsewhere during the most recent school year, initially with the lone Class C member, Narraguagus, seeking entry into the PVC.

The other schools, fearing dissolution of the conference, also sought out alternatives.

“Narraguagus decided to join the PVC to get more scheduled games, and they play a lot of teams in the PVC anyways,” said Leavitt. “We followed suit with that because honestly at the time I kind of felt like the DAC was falling apart.”

“We looked at joining the Aroostook League, too, but when I did the analysis of PVC schools versus Aroostook League schools, most of our games with the exception of Bangor Christian and Greenville are within an hour. We would have to travel nearly two hours to get to any of those [Class D] schools in the Aroostook League. At that point, for us it was a no-brainer.”

As PVC members, Machias and Narraguagus must play 50 percent of their games in a sport against fellow conference members in order to be eligible for post-season championships and awards — but those in-conference games can include each other as well as fellow DAC members Calais and Sumner.

“When you become a member of the PVC you basically are agreeing to the

schedule that is given to you, but within that the PVC is very good about individual schools’ requests,” said PVC president Brian Gaw, athletic administrator at Piscataquis Community Secondary School in Guilford.

“There’s no particular number you have to take, for example in an 18-game schedule you might only take six or eight games in the PVC. The only problem, if you see it as a problem, is you don’t qualify for PVC honors, team or individual, unless you play at least 50 percent of your schedule within the PVC.”

Machias will maintain its recent practice of playing Greenville in some sports, but beyond that its longest road trip for a game during the coming school year will be to Bangor Christian.

“The only thing the PVC asked of me was if we would play Greenville, and I said certainly because I want to help the league and we have played them in the past so it wasn’t any big deal for us,” said Leavitt.

“I couldn’t have asked for a better situation, really. Everything just kind of fell in line.”

Shead and Woodland also explored both the PVC and Aroostook League as possible dual-conference destinations.

Theriault and athletic administrators Josh McGuire of Shead and John Rogers of Woodland met with Aroostook League officials in January, and both schools were accepted this spring as members of that conference beginning in 2017-18.

The one-year delay for full membership stems from the Aroostook League building its schedule every two years, though league president Tim Watt said the conference is working to get Shead and Woodland some games for 2016-17.

The exception

The one Downeast Athletic Conference program that hasn’t pursued dual membership is its smallest

school, Jonesport-Beals.

“For us, it didn’t really make sense,” said Jonesport-Beals athletic administrator Dan Campbell. “Sure, it would be great to join a conference like that to get the scheduled games and be guaranteed games.”

“But for us to go up to Aroostook County, that’s about a four-hour drive every time, and the vast majority of the schools that are closest to us in the PVC are Class C schools and we’re a school of 70 kids, so playing a Class C schedule isn’t going to be very beneficial for us, either.”

Jonesport-Beals will

ful before I ever got here. I think that’s part of it,” said Campbell. “With basketball I haven’t had as much of an issue, but with these schools joining other conferences I feel like it maybe is just a matter of time before they aren’t going to be as willing to come and play us. The PVC has to look out for itself, too, so some of these schools we’re playing now might not be able to reserve those spots down the road.”

Solidification of sorts

The trend toward dual conference affiliation among Down East schools has worked both ways, with Calais and Sumner seeking admission to the DAC in order to take advantage of benefits that come from being part of a smaller grouping.

The Penobscot Valley Conference is the state’s largest high school league with more than 30 schools from the northern half of the state representing all four classes — five, counting basketball.

That makes eligibility for postseason awards and recognition a challenging aspiration.

Calais athletic administrator Randy Morrison always appreciated the emphasis the DAC placed on recognizing Down East athletes during his school’s long tenure in the league. He sees his school’s return to that conference as a dual member as a chance to shine another light on standout Blue Devil student-athletes through all-star teams and championship events.

“I didn’t really want the DAC to dissolve because Calais was in it for quite a few years until a couple of years ago,” he said, “and this will help our student-athletes to



Bangor Christian’s Jack York (bottom) tries to dive to second past Woodland’s Windsor Brooks during their game recently at the University of Maine in Orono.

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Bangor Christian’s Tyler Welch (center) gets caught in a rundown between Woodland’s Luke McDonald (left) and Gavin Gardner during their game recently at the University of Maine in Orono.

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Red Sox

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solo home run to David Ortiz — the 520th of his career — with two out as the Red Sox avoided what would have been their second shut-out of the season, their first since April 10. Ortiz, who has 17 homers, also had a double.

Jones hit his fourth homer during a five-game hitting streak, a monster shot off former Oriole prospect Eduardo Rodriguez (1-2 with three straight shaky outings) in the third inning and doubled home a run in the fourth as Rodriguez last-ed only 4 1/3 innings.

Manny Machado had three hits and Joey Rickard two for the Orioles.

The Jones homer was Baltimore’s major league-best 34th in June.

After an impressive season debut in Baltimore, Rodriguez has allowed 14 runs, 18 hits and nine walks in 14 2/3 innings over his last three starts. His ERA after four starts is 6.97.

Rodriguez worked around a pair of one-out singles in

the first and struck out two in a perfect second. But the dreaded walk, which has been hurting him, appeared again and a walk to Paul Janish set up Jones to hit a shot completely out of Fenway Park.

Dustin Pedroia’s inability to turn a double play led to the Orioles’ third run, in the fourth. Jonathan Schoop smacked what should have been a DP grounder at Xander Bogaerts, but Pedroia dropped the flip at second — Matt Wieters was out as Pedroia picked the ball up, but Schoop reached. He took third on Janish’s two-out single and scored when Jones rifled a 3-0 pitch into left field for a double.

Machado led off the fifth inning with a long double and scored on Chris Davis’ one-out single that knocked Rodriguez from the game. Schoop doubled Davis home from first with two out to make it 5-0.

Blue Jays 13, Phillies 2

PHILADELPHIA — Kevin Pillar hit two home runs and Edwin Encarnacion homered and drove in four runs as the Toronto Blue Jays battered the Philadelphia Phillies 13-2

on Thursday night.

Michael Saunders and Devon Travis also homered for the Jays, whose five home runs were a season high as were their 13 runs and 17 hits.

Josh Donaldson went 3-for-3, reached base five times and scored three runs for Toronto, which out-scored the Phillies 31-7 in winning the last three contests of a four-game home-and-home series.

The Blue Jays also won for the sixth time in seven games, and improved to 19-8 in their last 27.

Philadelphia lost for the 20th time in its last 26 games.

Pillar, who hit a leadoff homer off reliever Andrew Bailey in the seventh and a two-run shot off David Hernandez in the eighth, increased his season total to seven. It was the second multi-homer of his career. The other came June 2, 2015 against Washington.

Encarnacion, 2-for-4 in the game, homered for the sixth time in as many games and his 12th time in 20 career contests at Citizens Bank Park. He also increased his major league-leading RBI total to 61.

UMaine

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Maine went 26-9 this season and earned its second straight appearance in the Women’s NIT after losing to Albany 59-58 in the championship game. They went 23-9 the previous season and reached the conference semifinals.

Maine went 29-3 in conference regular-season games the past two seasons.

UMaine graduated eight players off this past year’s team, including six of the seven who averaged at least 16.7 minutes per game. Junior guard Sigi Koizar, an All-America East first team selection, will be the only returnee who played significant minutes.

“With eight seniors leaving, I did feel I had a good opportunity to play more. But even taking that into consideration, I still felt leaving is what was going to make me happiest,” she said.

Barron is bringing in seven freshmen and he will also gain the services of Tanesha Sutton, who sat

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PARISE ROSSIGNOL

out last season due to NCAA transfer rules. Sutton transferred from Duquesne.

Rossignol said she “loved every single teammate I had” and said they are like family to her which “made it a positive experience.”

She said she is thankful to the coaching staff for giving her the opportunity to fulfill a lifelong dream of playing at Maine and that she loves going to school there. Her plan is to finish her education at Maine.

Rossignol said she didn’t consider transferring but she doesn’t rule out playing again someday.

“I love the game of basketball and, after this year, if I really miss it, who knows what could happen? Right now, I can’t say that I’ll never play anywhere else because I do have two years of eligibility remaining. I guess time will tell.”

Rossignol led the state in scoring all four years and was the fastest Maine athlete, boy or girl, to reach 1,000 points. She was a Miss Maine Basketball finalist and a four-time Bangor Daily News All-Maine Schoolgirl Basketball Team selection.

She was a BDN All-Maine first-team choice her senior year when she averaged 30.6 points, nine rebounds, 5.7 assists and 2.3 steals per game. Rossignol led Van Buren in scoring in all 87 career games.

She also set the school record for goals in soccer with 116 and was the top-seeded player on her Eastern Maine championship tennis team.

Her father, Matt, played basketball at UMaine from 1985-89 and scored 1,297 points, which places him 11th on the program’s career list.