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Keene-Monadnock Thanksgiving Day Turkey Tussle is off

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*Updated March 24, 3 p.m.***By Jon Pelland
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The Turkey Tussle Thanksgiving Day football game between Keene and Monadnock Regional high schools, which has produced big crowds if not competitive matchups in recent years, will not be played next season.

"It's finalized that Keene and Monadnock won't be playing on Thanksgiving Day," Monadnock principal Brian Pickering said today.

Keene athletic director Leslie Farmer declined to comment, saying the school would make a formal announcement in the next day or two.

Keene might be trying to play a different school on Thanksgiving. Two possible replacements — Conval Regional and Gardner (Mass.) High — both said they are not in the mix. Conval athletic director Jon Hall said Keene contacted him in January, but his district is not interested in playing a Thanksgiving Day game.

"I can tell you that's not in my long-term plan," Hall said of a Thanksgiving game, regardless of the opponent.

Gardner, Mass., AD Howie Klash said his school is satisfied with its rivalry against Oakmont Regional in nearby Ashburnham, Mass. Gardner and Oakmont have played for about 20 years, according to Klash.

Monadnock officials also indicated that they may also might start looking for a new Thanksgiving Day opponent.

The matchup between Keene and Monadnock has been lopsided in recent years, with the Blackbirds winning the last three games by a combined score of 100-0. Monadnock won the 2005 game on a snowy Alumni Field at Keene High.

The game, which has alternated between Keene's Alumni Field and Monadnock's field, has routinely drawn crowds of 1,000-plus. Gate proceeds have gone to area charities.

See Talk Back and our "SportsTown" poll Wednesday to weigh in on the Turkey Tussle at sentinelsource.com.

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