

## The Greatest Show in Iowa

Written by Scott Unash

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Once again it's time for the annual event known as the "8-Ring Circus"!

Of course we are talking about the state wrestling tournament, which begins its annual four-day run today (Wednesday) at Wells Fargo Arena in Des Moines. Many Metro wrestlers will be taking to the mats on Thursday morning in the 3A session, and while a team trophy will in all likelihood not be coming back to town, there are several opportunities for an individual title and many placewinners.

Speaking of the state wrestling tournament, I have been covering high school sports since 1989 and nothing can even hold a candle to the excitement that is produced at this event, especially on Saturday night during the finals.

While Wells Fargo Arena is a great venue and has all the amenities that the modern-day fan needs, the tournament shined brightest across the street at "The Barn" -- Veterans Auditorium. It didn't matter the day, it didn't matter the class and it didn't matter which session of the meet it was, the place was special. It was full to the rafters more than it wasn't for every session, and even when there were a few precious seats to be had, the atmosphere was second to none.

The first time I witnessed first-hand the mania that is finals night was in 1987. My girlfriend -- now my wife -- and I went to "The Barn" to watch a wrestler from her high school go for his second consecutive state title in Class 1A.

I had been to "The Barn" for the state basketball tournament, but nothing prepared this kid, who grew up on basketball, from the rush I experienced that night. Nearly 13,000 people screaming their collective heads off for their guy -- the school's guy -- the town's guy -- to bring home the championship.

I never witnessed anything like it, even at Kinnick Stadium for a Hawkeye football game. If you have been there, you know what I mean. If you haven't, well, words do not do it justice. From

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the opening Grand March of the place-winning wrestlers, to the final whistle it is adrenaline personified.

So to all the wrestlers I say good luck. To all the parents and spectators have a great time, and embrace something that is truly unique to Iowa...the state wrestling championships!