

All-star game April 1 features Metro stars

Written by Jim Ecker

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Imagine an all-star basketball game with Metro stars Jarrod Uthoff, Josh Oglesby, Matt Bohannon, Wes Washpun and Kasey Semler all on the same court at the same time.

Imagine no more. Thanks to Jamie Johnson and Elite Sports USA, the inaugural Eastern Iowa All-Star Game will be staged on Friday, April 1 at Linn-Mar High School.

It will be a doubleheader, featuring a girls all-star game at 6 p.m. and a boys game at approximately 7:30.

Johnson, 36, has deep roots in high school basketball circles. He founded the Iowa Barnstormers all-star basketball program in 2004 and prior to that worked for FutureStars.

Johnson has worked with many of the top players in Iowa and felt it was time to stage an all-star game in this part of the state.

"The Quad Cities have the Iowa-Illinois games, and I've gone over there the last several years and watched that," he said. "I thought it was a good deal and wondered why nothing like that was being done here in the Iowa City-Cedar Rapids area.

"I kind of kicked it around with a few people," he said. "Everybody thought it was a good idea, but nobody ever seemed like they wanted to do it."

Johnson said he extended invitations to 20 of the top seniors in Eastern Iowa for the boys game and all 20 accepted. The list includes Uthoff (Jefferson), Oglesby (Washington), Bohannon (Linn-Mar), Washpun (Washington) and Semler (Marion), all of whom could be all-state selections this year.

Johnson said he also has commitments from Josh Montague (Linn-Mar) and Kyle Lamaak

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(Kennedy), along with other top players from around Eastern Iowa.

"What better time to do it?," said Johnson. "There's a plethora of talent here. And if it doesn't work this year with this kind of talent, it's never going to work. There's a lot of talent here, and I think it's a good way to finish the season for the local kids here in the area to get out and play one last time and have a good time."

Underclassmen are not eligible for an all-star game like this, so Linn-Mar junior Marcus Paige will not be playing.

Johnson said he also has commitments from Brandon Voss (North Scott), Trent Washington (Waterloo West), Michael Aldeman (Mid-Prairie), Zach Otting (Western Dubuque), Kyle Denning (NU High), Zach Velez-Westphal (Solon), J.T. Vonderhaar (Davenport Assumption), Tavian Pomlee (Davenport Central), Gage Heffernan (Dubuque Hempstead), Okey Ukah (Iowa City West), Patrick Burmester (DeWitt), Regan Takes (Cascade) and Nate Wells (Davenport West).

Johnson said he is still assembling the roster for the girls all-star game, but already has commitments from Olivia Meier (Kennedy), Alex Saxen (Xavier), Krissi Tow (Xavier), Jenna Eells (Linn-Mar) and Kristin Kramer (Marion).

Johnson said there will be a 3-point shooting contest during halftime of the girls game and a slam-dunk contest during halftime of the boys game.

He said tickets will cost \$5 for adults for \$4 for students and kids.

"I just hope the people come out and support it," said Johnson. "There's a lot of talent, both boys and girls, in the area. It would be nice if people came out and supported the kids that have come up playing for their respective schools here in the Metro area. If it goes well, we'll do it again."

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Linn-Mar star Kiah Stokes will be playing in the McDonald's and Nike all-star games in late March and early April, filling her NCAA-approved allotment of two all-star appearances.