

Marion boys chasing 4th state trip

Written by Jim Ecker

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The Marion Indians will be seeking their fourth trip to the boys state basketball tournament in school history Monday night when they face Benton in the Class 3A substate finals at the U.S. Cellular Center in downtown Cedar Rapids.

Tipoff is scheduled for 8 p.m.

This is the rubber match between the two Wamac Conference teams this season. The Indians (16-7) and Bobcats (16-7) split two games during the regular season, with each team winning at home.

Benton won the first game in a squeaker, 57-56, in early January. Marion prevailed in the second meeting in a lopsided game, 61-40, just three weeks ago.

Marion reached the state tournament in 1950 and 1952, then had to wait 57 years before making a return trip in 2009 when Kasey Semler, Dusty Albaugh and Tyler Fisher were sophomores. Semler leads the Indians at 21.8 points per game and Albaugh contributes 12.1 per contest.

Semler has dropped into second place in Class 3A scoring after holding the top spot for much of the season. Cole Darrow of Underwood is the new leader at 22.1 points.

Benton is led by seniors Zach Twedt (15.4 points) and Mitch Lester (12.6).

There is a Class 3A substate doubleheader at the U.S. Cellular Center. Fifth-ranked Solon (21-2) faces 10th-ranked Dubuque Wahlert (17-6) at 6:30.

The other 3A substate finals tonight feature No.2 Sioux City Heelan (21-2) versus LeMars (18-5), No.8 MOC-Floyd Valley (20-3) versus No.4 Carroll (21-2), Clear Lake (15-8) versus No.1

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Waverly-Shell Rock (23-0), No.3 Mount Pleasant (21-2) versus No.9 Pella (19-3), No.7 Dallas Center-Grimes (21-2) vs. Ballard (13-10), and Norwalk (20-3) versus Carlisle (11-11).

The Class 3A state tournament will be held at the Wells Fargo Arena in Des Moines from March 8-12.