

An historic night for Metro boys basketball

Written by Scott Unash

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It was an historic night for Metro boys basketball Tuesday at the U.S. Cellular Center.

Everyone who follows high school basketball around these parts was well aware that we have been witnessing something very special this season. That fact was validated when four boys Metro teams qualified for the state tournament in Des Moines next week.

Never before has the Metro sent four teams. On three other occasions three teams qualified. When the postseason pairings were released early last month, many of us realized this could be the year for this amazing breakthrough.

Now it has happened.

Enjoy it everyone ... because you never know when a year like this with great teams and amazingly talented individuals is going to come around again. The last time, in my judgment, was 27 years ago.

Now, let's take a look at the Metro's prospects this year in Des Moines.

For Marion in 3A, you might as well start off with the best to be the best. The Indians draw the No. 8 seed and are opposite top-rated Waverly-Shell Rock. What I have learned is to never under estimate this Marion team. The group of senior starters led by Kasey Semler, Dusty Albaugh and Tyler Fisher have been through a lot and will not back down to anyone. The "X-Factor" will be W-SR's strength of schedule. The Northeast Iowa Conference was very down this year, while the Indians played a tough Wamac slate and a non-conference game with Jefferson. Can the Indians win? Perhaps, but I know they will keep it close.

The 4A field is one of the best in recent memory. Basically all of the favored teams from the substate finals won, setting up some terrific quarterfinal pairings. Starting things off will be the third go-round between Linn-Mar and Washington. A scary proposition for the Lions because they have already beaten Wash twice during the year. You don't want to have to try and shut down Josh Oglesby and Wes Washpun too many times. Linn-Mar should be back at full strength with Josh Montague coming back from a knee injury. I see it a closer game this time around and my only wish is that the rest of the state gets to see all of this talent on the court at its top form that we have been enjoying all winter.

Jefferson gets another mystery team in Des Moines Hoover in round one. Hoover has great

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athletes and is well coached. It has not played one of the harder 4A schedules around the state and I think that will help the J-Hawks. Jeff learned a lot from its tough first-round loss a year ago to Sioux City East and that should help the J-Hawks break through to the win column. They will need Jarrod Uthoff to stay out of foul difficulty this year and be a force both inside and out.

When it comes down to it Linn-Mar has to be the favorite and I think most coaches, fans and the media would agree. But it will certainly not be a walk in the park for the Lions. Can they go undefeated and remind people of what Ames did a year ago (with more D1 talent than the Little Cyclones had, by the way)? I think they can, but it will not be an easy road.

Let's just hope that the "Show" we have seen all year here in town goes on the road and makes one final encore before taking their talents to the next level.