

## Observations from the state tournaments

Written by Scott Unash

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Well, things are beginning to return to normal. I'm catching up on my sleep and, above all, trying to eat healthier again after two weeks of the basic four "junk food" groups! Now that the state tournaments are in the rear-view mirror, here are a few things I took note of from the past two weeks:

### **Contact, Part I**

Let's welcome the girls to the "No blood, no foul" club. It was the most physical girls tournament I have ever witnessed. I can't imagine E. Wayne Cooley, the former leader of the Girls Union tolerating the pushing and shoving and continuous contact that I witnessed! It sure wasn't the bygone era of 6-on-6 anymore!

### **Contact, Part II**

Actually thought the contact may have been down for the boys tournaments, until the semifinals came and it was every man for himself again. At times the players are not playing basketball. It's football without the pads. Something needs to be done to address the physical play, especially off the ball and out of eye-shot of the officials.

### **Protect the Shooter**

This one is in conjunction with my good friend and broadcast partner Phil Dunne. You can't have a kid shooting a jump shot get run over on the release, If you don't call this, basketball resorts to a sort of Darwinistic mentality. We saw more kids being thrown down after shooting a jump shot this year than ever before. Only a handful of fouls were called.

### **Free Throw Shooting**

Worst year of foul shooting, aside from a precious few teams, that we have ever seen. Young kids, do you want to be assured of playing? Practice free throws!! You shoot over 70% and you will play at the end of games. But practicing free throws went out with short shorts and fundamentals.

### **TV Timeouts**

I see my colleague Mark Dukes addressed in his column the low scores at the state tournament. One solution is very simple, at least for the title games. Reduce the number of media (TV) timeouts!! There are two TV timeouts in each eight-minute quarter of the championship games. That computes to eight stoppages in play during a high school game. That's way too many to create a normal "flow" of a game. There was a timeout after the 6-minute mark and the 4-minute mark of each quarter. On the plus side, teams had their regular timeout allotment cut from five to two for the girls finals and three for the boys. There was no way to develop any rhythm and flow and that is a bad recipe, even for the top teams in the

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state. And if you are a team that likes to press and run, forget it. You are basically sunk!

### **Rivalry Alive and Well, Thank You**

The healthy rivalries between sections of the state are still going strong, especially between Eastern and Central Iowa. The latter is fueled in a big way by the Mississippi Valley and CIML Conferences. Each has great teams, athletes and wants to be the best. This year was a push with each side winning a title.

### **The Metro**

Was it the best year for the Metro in basketball? You can certainly make a case for the boys side. It was a great group of players headlined by Jarrod Uthoff's winning the Mr. Basketball Award, the sixth Metro player to win the honor. And No. 7 is not too far behind for next season. These things are cyclical. There will be another great group that will come along at some point in the future, but we'll always remember the names of Uthoff, Oglesby, Washpun, Bohannon, Paige and Semler. It was a pleasure to watch and call your games for the past several seasons!

Before I sign off, this was the end of an era. I check in on Vets Auditorium each and every year at the state tournaments, just to look in and imagine the way things were in the "Old Barn." Sadly, this year I couldn't as it is being refurbished as a convention center. The seats apparently have been removed and the building will take on a different look from here on in. Hopefully, everyone has their own personal memories of the great place. I know I do.