

## The great summer debate

Written by Scott Unash

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The state of Iowa offers summer baseball and softball.

The other 49 states offer these sports during the spring, or at other times during the calendar year.

Who is right?

This debate has raged for many, many years around the state of Iowa. For some time, athletes did have a choice. The state offered both baseball and softball in the spring and summer, for those kids who could only play one season or elected to play both. Now it's a choice and many times a tough choice.

Baseball and softball are the top two sports in high school athletics that have their participation numbers influenced most by outside factors. Many skilled players have quit playing because these sports are played in the summer months. The season conflicts with both individual and team camps of other sports, jobs and, most notably, a kid's free time during the warm weather when there is no schoolwork to interrupt them.

So what should be done? What is the right answer? There is nothing cut-and-dry, it is solidly in the charcoal gray area. Personally, I believe that we can't move the baseball and softball seasons at this time. A change to the spring would overlap with track, tennis, golf and, above all, soccer. This would not be a good idea because all of the sports would suffer.

My suggestion would be to move the baseball season up one week. Just one simple week. Have the state championships be played the third week of July instead of the fourth week. That would give a good solid full week for athletes and families to relax and decompress after the grind of the baseball campaign, especially if your son or daughter is also involved in a fall sport.

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Right now, if your son is an underclassman and out for baseball and football, and your team qualifies for the state tournament, you have NO time off between seasons. No time for healing up your body, and no time with your family enjoying the summer before you head into the rigors of the fall. This is tough and one of the big reasons why numbers have declined in baseball over the last decade.

Personally, our family is going through this right now with my son playing varsity baseball at Kennedy. We do not have a family vacation or getaway planned for the summer because of the tight proximity of the two sports.

Softball did help itself out several years ago by moving their season up two weeks to allow their athletes a break between the summer and the fall sports season. This was a great move, although they did cut the number of games in the softball season, which I do not agree with. These girls can have some summer to relax and be kids without having to worry about competition for a couple of weeks.

That's my solution. Will it help the number of participants in each sport? That remains to be seen. Will it help athletes trying to fit in camps and competition during the summer? Probably not.

But I think in the long run this would help athletes and families to enjoy their summers even more, rest up for the fall, and who knows? Maybe it would get more kids to stay with baseball and softball through the hot summer months.