

I.C. formidable; Uthoff sits, Stokes doesn't

Written by Mark Dukes

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Metro 4A teams constantly butt heads with Iowa City teams, somewhat naturally because they are in the same conference but also because their paths often collide in the postseason.

Iowa City High eliminated Kennedy in the 4A first round football playoff bracket. Iowa City West edged the Cougars in the state volleyball semifinals – for the third straight year - in a five-set thriller.

Linn-Mar and Washington both defeated City High in regular-season football games. But Iowa City West went through the Valley Division unbeaten, including wins over Xavier, Prairie and Jefferson.

Iowa City's excellence in boys' and girls' sports has been consistent. At least one Iowa City school has qualified for the state football playoffs for 20 consecutive seasons.

City High and West met in the state volleyball finals, with the Trojans winning a five-set match. The boys' and girls' cross country teams of both schools each had Top 11 state finishes. In state swimming, City High's boys and West's girls both finished sixth.

And then there's Regina, Iowa City's Catholic school. The Regals, under former Iowa star Marv Cook, have won 28 straight football games and Saturday captured their second straight state championship.

How is there so much talent to go around in a community of fewer than 70,000 people?

Opinions vary. Some point to the fact Iowa City is a college town and the University of Iowa's hundreds of employees produce kids who excel in extra-curricular activities. The growth of Coralville and North Liberty also figure in, as do traditions at each school.

The Metro area collectively doesn't necessarily have to take a back seat to its southern brethren, as various results can show. But it's worth pondering why Iowa City's three schools continue to produce outstanding programs.

UTHOFF TAKES RED-SHIRT – Jarrod Uthoff, Iowa's Mr. Basketball last season out of Cedar Rapids Jefferson, has impressed coaches in his first year at Wisconsin but has decided to red-shirt this season.

Uthoff made the announcement Saturday. Although he won't play for the Badgers in 2011-12, he can practice and travel with the team.

"When it came down to it, I figured I could have a bigger impact on the program in my fifth year than I would in my true freshman season," Uthoff told UWBadgers.com. "Now I can use this year to develop my skills and get stronger and hopefully be even more prepared when the 2012-13 season starts."

Uthoff is hopeful of getting stronger before embarking on his first varsity season next year.

"Jarrod just turned 18 in the spring, so he's really young for his grade," Wisconsin associate head Greg Gard said. "I think looking at the big picture, he figured out that an extra year is really going to help him physically. He really thought hard over this and red-shirting can never be a negative if you handle it the right way, and he'll handle it terrifically. He'll be a very good player here."

Former Linn-Mar prep Zach Bohannon, whose brother Jason starred at Wisconsin, also will red-shirt this season for the Badgers. That is mandated by NCAA rules since he has transferred from Air Force.

KIAH CONTRIBUTING – One former Metro star who won't be red-shirting in her freshman college season is Kiah Stokes of Linn-Mar.

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Stokes has played an average of 17 ½ minutes in Connecticut's first two blowout victories over Pacific and Holy Cross. She has scored 12 points and snared 8 rebounds.

The Huskies hook up with Stanford Monday night in Hartford, Conn., in a matchup of two perennial women's basketball powers.

(Mark Dukes is former sports editor of the Cedar Rapid Gazette. He is co-host of The Gym Class radio show weekdays from 3-4 p.m. on KGYM-AM 1600.)