

Tournament talk and other tidbits

Written by Scott Unash

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The field has been set for this year's edition of the State Girls Basketball Tournament at Wells Fargo Arena in Des Moines next week. It was another banner year for the Mississippi Valley Conference as four of its 14 schools will be taking their respective acts on the road to the capitol city next week, three 4A teams plus Dubuque Wahlert in Class 3A.

As for the Metro area, it was a season of mixed results. One team will be busing to Des Moines, the Xavier Saints. With Xavier as the lone representative, this marks the fewest Metro teams participating in the state tournament since 2004, when Kennedy was the only school to make it to Des Moines.

I really don't think it was a "down" year for the girls game in town, Some terrific individuals took the court this year, but a majority of the teams were very young this season. That youth led to a more balanced Metro scene. Injuries also took their toll on some of the Metro teams. Jefferson was an example, losing three starters from its lineup throughout the year. Linn-Mar also lost Shanice Cheatham to a major knee injury which affected its season.

Time to look into the crystal ball and check on how I see the 4A field faring in Des Moines next week.

First off, again the IGHS AU gives two eastern Iowa teams the beloved 10 a.m. time slot. And I'm sure that once again the IGHS AU will wonder why they get a low attendance figure for that game. This year it's Iowa City West and City High battling at 10 a.m. while the Central Iowa Metropolitan League (CIML) teams, and their larger crowds, wait for the preferred time slots.

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Just a suggestion, but I bet more fans from this side of the state would attend more games if they didn't have to leave before the sun came up!

I see a wide-open and defensive minded state tournament. I think Iowa City West, with but one loss, is the favorite. The Women of Troy's toughest game may be right out of the chute playing cross-town rival City High for the third time this year.

I like Xavier's chances. This may not be the most talented team that the Saints have ever sent to the state tournament, but it has a dedicated group of seniors that play basketball the way Coach Tom Lilly preaches: defense first. The Saints will stay in each and every game and I like their draw. It would be great to have an all MVC final a week from Saturday night.

The football schedules for the next two years were released Tuesday by the IHSAA. Here are some interesting notes.

The Marion Indians have drawn three very tough non-district opponents. The Indians play Mount Pleasant and Decorah before the district season and Washington, Iowa, on the "bye week" during the district campaign. Those three teams represent three of the better Class 3A football programs in eastern Iowa. It will be great to have Decorah make an appearance in the Metro area after a long absence.

Cedar Valley Christian will host its first home games next season, at a field still yet to be determined. The Huskies have reserved three games for Springville and two for Central City. Valley of Elgin will be the first team to visit the City of Five Seasons for an 8-Man game on August 31.

The most pleasant aspect of the district football schedules across the state was the flexibility included by the IHSAA. The final schedules include class "crossover" games between schools of different classes to save on travel and expense. For example, Ottumwa in a Class 4A district will renew old rivalries outside of Class 4A by playing Mount Pleasant and Keokuk. This idea, according to what I read and understood, was not a part of the original plans for non-district games. This is a great move and shows a great deal of insight by the administrators in Boone. Bravo to all concerned.

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