

Cedar Valley Christian joining IHSA, IGHSU

Written by Jim Ecker

Wednesday, 02 February 2011 17:33 - Last Updated Thursday, 03 February 2011 22:03

Cedar Valley Christian School plans to join the official governing bodies for high school sports in Iowa, effective with the start of the 2011-12 school year.

The school will join the Iowa High School Athletic Association (IHSA) for boys sports and the Iowa Girls High School Athletic Union (IGHSU) for girls sports.

"Paperwork has not been signed, but it's been confirmed verbally and through e-mail," said Stephanie Hodge, the athletic director at Cedar Valley Christian. "We have been accepted."

Cedar Valley Christian is a private school in southeast Cedar Rapids with 75 students in grades 9 through 12. The school is a member of the Northern Illinois Christian Conference, but will be leaving to seek stronger competition and save on travel costs.

Cedar Valley Christian currently has a limited varsity sports program with boys basketball, girls basketball and girls volleyball, but Hodge said the school plans to add more teams. Cedar Valley Christian also has coed soccer, with boys and girls on the same team.

The school will compete at the 1A level for the smallest schools in the IHSA and IGHSU, with full privileges and eligibility for postseason tournaments. Hodge said Cedar Valley Christian will compete as an independent school in 2011-12, with the possibility of joining a league after that.

The Cedar Valley Christian basketball teams traveled to Minneapolis last weekend for a tournament and make regular trips to Illinois for conference road games. They also travel to Wisconsin.

"We miss a lot of school. We spend several nights in a hotel," said Hodge. "We leave school early in the afternoon for some of our long-distance games."

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Hodge has already arranged the girls volleyball schedule for this fall, filled with tournaments and matches within a reasonable driving distance to Bellevue, Clinton, Cedar Falls, Dunkerton, Tama, Garwin, Waterloo and elsewhere.

Hodge said Cedar Valley Christian officials have been thinking about joining the IHSAA and IGHS AU for at least five years.

"It's become apparent in the last couple of years that we need to be out of this conference (the Northern Illinois Christian)," she said. "We want to play tougher teams, and if we lose, we lose. But we want that competition and the challenge. We really think it will grow our program."

Cedar Valley Christian's move to the IHSAA and IGHS AU will force some of its students to choose schools. At least three girls who attend Cedar Valley Christian are currently playing basketball for other Metro schools, even though Cedar Valley Christian has its own team. That will not be allowed once the school joins the IGHS AU.

"They have to make a decision," said Hodge.

Cedar Valley Christian students still will be allowed to play for other schools if the sport is not offered at Cedar Valley Christian.