

Northrup wrestling a girl? No comment

Written by Jim Ecker

Monday, 14 February 2011 17:51 - Last Updated Tuesday, 15 February 2011 14:40

Linn-Mar sophomore Joel Northrup has wrestled a girl before, but that was a long time ago. "When I was real young," he said Monday.

He'll wrestle another girl Thursday morning at the Class 3A state tournament in Des Moines, and this will make history.

Girls have been wrestling against boys for more than 20 years in Iowa on high school teams, but this is the first time a girl has qualified for the state meet.

There are two, in fact.

Cassy Herkelman, a freshman from Cedar Falls High School, qualified this year. So did Megan Black, a sophomore from Ottumwa.

Northrup will face Herkelman in the first round at Wells Fargo Arena on opening day of the 86th IHSAA wrestling tournament.

It will be an historic occasion. Northrup said he'll be happy to talk about it after the match, but not now.

"I don't really have a comment for that," he said Monday before practice at Linn-Mar. "I'll talk to you after the first round."

This is no publicity stunt. Herkelman and Black have wrestled for their varsity teams all season and finished second at their respective district meets this past Saturday.

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Herkelman has compiled a 20-13 record for Cedar Falls, while Black is 25-13 for Ottumwa. Both wrestle at 112 pounds.

Northrup, a district champion, will be heavily favored to defeat Herkelman. He finished third in the state tournament at 103 pounds last season as a freshman and has fashioned a 33-4 record this year as a sophomore.

Northrup pinned two opponents at the district tournament in Epworth Saturday and won his other match on an injury default.

"I thought it was great," he said. "I'm ready for the state meet."

Northrup is wrestling well after missing the Mississippi Valley Conference meet two weeks ago with the flu. "I feel good," he said.

Northrup has four sisters, but he doesn't wrestle against them. "Not really," he said.

Linn-Mar Coach Doug Streicher doesn't think girls should be allowed to wrestle against boys in high school.

"I don't think they should be in wrestling or football," he said. "Boys aren't allowed in volleyball."

State rules allow female students to participate in a boys sport when their school does not offer a comparable activity, but it doesn't work in reverse for the boys.

Northrup, who is home-schooled, sees his match against Herkelman as the first step toward a possible state title. Any further comment will have to wait until Thursday.