

## Respect the Northrups' decision

Written by Mike Koolbeck

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The Class 3A portion of the state wrestling tournament had barely started this morning when the first big jolt of the meet occurred. Linn-Mar sophomore Joel Northrup defaulted his first round match at 112 pounds to Cassy Herkelman of Cedar Falls, one of the first two girls to ever qualify for the state meet. Readers of the Metro Sports Report were aware this was going to happen because of an exclusive report our Jim Ecker had Tuesday night.

Northrup cited religious beliefs as his reason for not wrestling a girl.

While some may choose to condemn Northrup and his family for their choice not to compete, I believe we should respect their decision.

Because he defaulted, Northrup sacrificed his chance to win a state title. He was third at 103 pounds last year and was regarded as a title contender this season. He still could match that third-place finish by battling back through the consolation round. He won his first round consolation match with a major decision over Sam Jameson of Glenwood this morning.

But he will not be a champion.

This is not to say that girls should not be allowed to wrestle. The rules are that they can and, with numbers being what they are in many programs, they will be wrestling varsity competition.

And this is not a lament for the terrible luck Northrup had in being paired with Herkelman in the first round. Fate seems to find a person in these situations.

This is to acknowledge that Northrup was placed in what he and his family saw as a moral dilemma and had the fortitude to make the hard decision, to sacrifice a possible state championship for their beliefs.

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For that, they deserve our respect.