

## Tourney time could be good for Metro teams

Written by Bob Brooks

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At last we have hit tournament time, one of the most exciting times of the high school year athletically. Cedar Rapids and Marion, in both girls and boys basketball, should be well-represented in Des Moines.

First up will be Linn-Mar, as the defending girls champion, and Cedar Rapids Washington. Washington split two games with Linn-Mar in the regular season, which in my mind makes the Warriors viable contenders for the 4A state championship.

And on the boys side, does Cedar Rapids and Marion have an answer for last year's state titlist Ames? That was the Harrison Barnes era at Ames, and does Linn-Mar have an answer in the person of Marcus Paige?

In fact, it brings to mind the answer is a positive, because Paige is every bit the player that Barnes was with the Little Cyclones. And maybe come college time, Paige will be an even better player from his position and maybe become even more valuable to North Carolina than Barnes.

That's not to demean Barnes' star attraction, because he is having a very good freshman year, averaging double digits, and his game has helped the Tar Heels coming down the stretch in the ACC.

But what I have seen of Paige is truly amazing in his total game, his balance and grace on the court, and his generalship of the Lions. One thing we do know is that he will draw a great deal of attention in Des Moines.

On the other side of the talent pool would be the athleticism of Josh Oglesby at Washington and Jarrod Uthoff at Jefferson. Will three teams from the Metro get to the tournament? If they do, the fans are in for a treat, not only from the teams' standpoint, but to take a look at the stars of the future at the college level as well.

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Let's hope that can happen. It would be great for Cedar Rapids and Marion, since this has been a vintage year talent-wise at the regular-season level.

And a reminder for wrestling devotees, the state duals -- the after-show of the state wrestling championships -- will be competed this Saturday at the U.S. Cellular Center, where Waverly-Shell Rock should be able to validate its traditional state title.

And a tip of the fedora to the two Cedar Rapids champions, Zach Witte from Prairie and Conner Herman from Jefferson, the first man from J-Hawk Country to win a state wrestling title in the last 13 years.