

Bruns family gets to state basketball tourney

Written by Bob Brooks

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First up: A tip of the fedora to the four Metro area teams that have qualified for the boys state basketball tournament next week. Let's hope they all play up to their potential and show the rest of the state the fine basketball that's been played in the Metro area this year.

My impression of the two Class 4A substate finals at the U.S. Cellular Center Tuesday night was like watching two baseball no-hitters with the lack of scoring by the two visiting teams, North Scott and Dubuque Hempstead. Yes, they had near-shutouts pitched against them in the second half of their games against Linn-Mar and Washington.

With the state finals coming up, there are always stories within the story. So it was in Marion's victory in the Class 3A substate finals on Monday.

One of the assistant coaches at Marion, on a volunteer basis with the varsity, is Wes Bruns, who was an outstanding player at Cedar Rapids Prairie, where his late father Laverne Bruns was a very successful high school coach. But, Laverne Bruns never got a team to the state tournament. And when his son came along, the son also never got to the state tournament as a player.

But, not quite so fast. Laverne Bruns, before his days at Prairie, was a baseball coach in the Benton Community district. And at that time, the baseball team got to the state tournament. And now the son, riding as a bench coach with Marion, will finally get a member of the Bruns family to the state basketball tournament.

And by getting there, Marion beat Benton Community, where his father had coached. That's just one of the many stories that could be developed next week in Des Moines.

Let's go back even further to the days when the Sweet 16 was competed at the old Field House in Iowa City, with no class distinctions. At that time, the Davenport Blue Devils were reigning supreme with Coach Paul Moon, who wore spats on the sidelines. It will take two or three more

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columns to explain what spats are, so I'll leave you to warm your ankles on that part of it.

Moon and his teams still hold some of the most important records in the boys state tournament. Of course, they always talk about the championship game when Gary Thompson was the star at smallish Roland High School.

At this time of year, I always remember Coach Moon's comment: I'll guarantee you, the Davenport Blue Devils will never lose to a Class B school. And they never did, even though the Roland Rockets came as close as anybody ever got to them.

Those are just a couple of many stories within the story that could come to the fore at the state tournament in Des Moines.