

Duals gone; embrace what remains

Written by Mark Dukes

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Recent news from the Iowa High School Athletic Association last week has changed the sport of wrestling but it also had a profound effect on Cedar Rapids.

In addition to changing weight classes, the IHSAA moved the state team wrestling tournament to Wells Fargo Arena in Des Moines the day before the traditional state championships in February 2012. Instead of the team meet being held in Cedar Rapids a week later than the traditional event, now all state wrestling action is in a four-day period in the state capital.

It is one fewer state tournament that Cedar Rapids will host.

One reaction to the move was that the IHSAA and Iowa Girls' High School Athletic Union really want every state competition to be held in Des Moines. But that simply isn't true.

Des Moines is host to six state tournaments in boys sports and five in girls. Nine other cities host state competition in boys sports, and eight others for girls. So it is simply not true that the two governing bodies prefer Des Moines to be the ultimate state site.

Cedar Rapids now has just two state tournaments – volleyball and boys' tennis. The state volleyball tournament will move to the Cedar Rapids Ice Arena next fall due to construction at the U.S. Cellular Center, but it presumably will be back downtown in 2012. Cedar Rapids has an agreement with the IGHSAU to host the state volleyball tournament through 2015. The boys' tennis tournament has been headquartered at the Veterans Memorial Tennis center for several years.

Does the Metro area deserve to host more state championships?

Some sites have become too good to move. Football at the UNI-Dome in Cedar Falls is perfect.

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Drake Stadium is the only real venue for track. Wells Fargo Arena is ideal for basketball and wrestling. Fort Dodge has been a solid softball site for years. Muscatine and Des Moines have wonderful soccer complexes.

That doesn't leave much for other cities. Golf has been spread around to various courses, but Hunters Ridge in Marion or one of the country clubs would be a good test. Principal Park in Des Moines has become a dandy for baseball. Marshalltown has the swimming meets and I don't think there's a pool with ample seating in this area. There may be a cross country course in the Metro area suitable for state competition, but Fort Dodge has had a stranglehold on it. Bowling? An alley is an alley, sure, but you need room for spectators.

Cedar Rapids probably never will get the state dual meet wrestling tournament back, so we're left with volleyball and boys tennis. We should continue to embrace those competitions and continue to put in our best effort to keep them.