

Dear readers: Thanks for sticking with MSR

Written by Jim Ecker

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Most of you know that the Metro Sports Report nearly went out of business last spring due to financial problems.

We found a way to survive, thank goodness, and now here's the good news: Nearly half of our readers have stuck with us even though we had to greatly curtail what we cover.

We finished 2016 with 489,406 page views, which is 47.1 percent of the page views we had in 2015 when we were covering just about every team in the Metro area of Cedar Rapids and Marion.

That's a remarkable number, considering that now we're focusing our attention on Xavier High School, Kirkwood Community College and the Iowa Valley baseball league, with weekly columns about the Iowa football team thrown in for good measure.

That's a far cry from when we were covering all of the Metro high schools, all three of the local colleges, the Kernels and the RoughRiders. We simply did not have the resources to continue that extensive coverage, but we're glad that nearly half of you have stayed by our side and encouraged us to keep going.

Our financial situation is much brighter now and we're looking to bouncing back even further in 2017, especially when we officially launch the new Iowa Women's Softball League this summer.

We're working on a few other ideas that might help us cover a few more teams this year, but it's too early to say.

All told, the Metro Sports Report has received 5,637,265 page views since we launched the

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website in 2011. We're heading into our seventh year of operation now and we'd like to thank all of our readers and all of our generous sponsors for keeping us in business.

Our biggest story of 2016 was about the Linn-Mar football program and the families who filed complaints against the head coach, an assistant coach, the athletic director and the principal for the way the program was being handled.

We broke that story on Feb. 16 and it drew 37,261 page views, more than 10 times the number of page views that any other story drew in 2016 and making it No. 2 all-time on our list (trailing only the story about Jarrod Uthoff leaving the Wisconsin basketball team).

The Linn-Mar coaches and officials were cleared by the Iowa Board of Educational Examiners, but the Linn-Mar school district conducted a second probe of its own that apparently substantiated some of the original complaints.

Assistant coach Matt Casebolt did not coach the Lions this past season, and when the year ended head coach Bob Forsyth resigned.

The Metro Sports Report was criticized by some people for writing a series of articles about Linn-Mar, but we felt it was an important story and that the families deserved to be heard.

We don't go looking for controversial stories, but we're not going to shy away if something comes our way. Most of you know that by now.

Quite simply, the Metro Sports Report has been a true labor of love ever since we began six years ago. Thanks very much for your continued support.