

## Analyzing the boys basketball poll

Written by Scott Unash

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I've heard the same response from many coaches here in the Metro area, "That and a quarter will buy you a cup of coffee!"

Maybe 20 years ago, before lattes and mochas became all the rage and pushed coffee prices to more than \$2 a cup!

What they are referring to are rankings, the weekly polls put out by the Associated Press and other organizations ranking the state's high school basketball and football teams. The polls have been around for many years, at least the AP poll, and haven't really been looked at closely. That's what I will attempt to do today.

For our look at the polls and how they work, we will focus on the AP poll. This poll is made up of voters from around the state who are members of the Associated Press. They can be newspaper writers, television sports reporters or radio broadcasters. That's where I come in.

I have been fortunate enough to be asked to take part in the voting for the weekly poll this year, and I take this role very seriously so that I can help establish the top teams in Iowa.

Here is how it works, and it is fairly simple: you vote for the top 10 teams for each sport and each class. The team you vote at the top spot gets 10 points, the second place team gets nine points and so on down the line. All the votes from around the state are tallied and you have your top 10's in each class.

There are a couple of details to talk about with the polls for each sport. First of all, the football poll is much easier to fill out than the basketball poll. There seems to be an endless array of information put out by various media outlets, websites and the like to help with your decisions in football. Plus, you know the exact record for each team in each district in each class through the Iowa High School Association's fine website.

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Basketball is much tougher. There are two less classes, you don't have nearly the data like you do in the fall, and the scores and records are sometimes hard to find.

I will say that it is much easier to find the top squads in the state now than it was several years ago, thanks to the Quik Stats website operated by the Iowa High School Athletic Association and the Girls Union. By the way, the Girls Union puts out its own rankings. We have nothing to do with that!

So the next time you wonder why your favorite team is not in the rankings, perhaps this will give you some insight on just how tough it is to come up with the list that comes out each week. It is certainly not an exact science, but more often than not we are fairly accurate.

With that being said, there were many writers back in the day who were part of the "Good 'ol Boy Network" that would routinely rank their favorite teams no matter what their records were. I think those days are behind us for the most part, and we can hopefully give you somewhat of a clear picture of the best teams in Iowa.

Of course, it doesn't mean the No.1 team will be guaranteed to win the state championship!

*EDITOR'S NOTE: Scott Unash is the sports director of radio station KGYM in Cedar Rapids.*