

Warriors lead Metro in state titles

Written by Mark Dukes

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State championships may not be the only measurement of success for high school teams. After all, not every team has the talent, the coaching, the tradition or the luck to be a legitimate contender.

At the same time, a state championship is the biggest carrot dangled in front of every team. It is the ultimate prize in high school athletics, the one common goal for every squad as seasons begin.

Last month, the Des Moines Register published a fascinating piece on Iowa high school state championships. The Register compiled information on every championship won since the Iowa High School Athletic Association and Iowa Girls' High School Athletic Union began sanctioning state tournaments.

The Register has an interactive map on its website that has all the information. You can search by county, by school and by year. Interestingly, at least one team in each of Iowa's 99 counties has won a state title.

As one might expect, the most populated counties have the most state titles: Polk 362, Linn 245, Scott 187, Black Hawk 166 and Johnson 159.

Dig a little deeper and you find some very interesting facts about our seven Metro teams.

-- Washington, by far, has the Metro area's most state titles with 62. The Warriors have championship banners in several sports, but the number is strengthened significantly by success in boys' swimming. Teams coached by Hal Krizan, Jim Voss and Chris Cruise have combined to win 27 titles.

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-- Jefferson, which opened its doors the same year as Washington, has 17 state championships and many of those came in the 1960s and '70s. Incredibly, the J-Hawks have not had a state championship in a boys sport in 36 years. The last was in 1975 in gymnastics, a sport no longer sanctioned in Iowa. The last title for Jefferson was in 1998 by the softball team.

-- Xavier has been in operation only 13 years but is second behind Washington in Metro area titles with 23. All of them have come since 2003. Eight of the championships are in soccer, including the last six years by the girls program. Regis and LaSalle, each of which closed when Xavier opened, had 10 titles between them (8 by Regis, 2 by LaSalle).

-- Aside from Xavier, Kennedy has been a consistent titlist in recent years. Cougar squads have topped the state in at least one sport each of the past four seasons. Kennedy has 11 state titles to its credit.

-- Linn-Mar is another with recent success, especially in boys' and girls' basketball. The Lions have 16 championships.

-- Marion has 17 state title banners, including 10 by its cross country teams in the 1940s and '50s.

-- Prairie won a state championship as recently as 2010 with its boys' cross country teams. The Hawks have eight titles in school history.

By the way, Cedar Rapids' first state championship came in 1921 when the city had just one high school. Cedar Rapids won the boys' outdoor track title that year, the first of five straight.

(Mark Dukes is former sports editor of the Cedar Rapid Gazette. He is co-host of The Gym Class radio show weekdays from 3-4 p.m. on KGYM-AM 1600.)