

Metro teams looking up to IC West

Written by Mark Dukes

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It hasn't been a horrible season by any stretch for Metro teams in state tournament play thus far. But everything seems to pale in comparison to Iowa City West's success.

West added a boys state track championship Saturday to its already-impressive resume during the 2011-2012 athletic season. It was the Trojans' fourth state title this school year to go along with seven other Top 10 state finishes.

West has had a terrific run of athletes in recent times, and that's really all it takes to be successful at the state level. That sounds very simple, but it's true in the high school ranks. The cycle of athletes can make a high school's prowess pretty large during a fixed period of time.

The Metro area has no state championships this season, at least up until now. Tennis, soccer, golf, baseball and softball championships still are to be decided, and local teams are going to have quite a bit to say about who claims the big trophies this spring and summer.

I've been reminded by local high school athletic directors and coaches that state championships sometimes are not the best measure of success, and that's true to a certain extent. Over-achieving teams can be just as satisfying for a school and a coach as a state champion. At the same time, state championships are the goals of most teams and they can be a fairly good barometer of a school's quality of athletic depth.

Iowa City West made headlines during the winter when its boys and girls basketball teams both won state titles. The volleyball team captured a state crown, and the wrestling team finished

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third in each of the traditional and dual state tournaments. Add to that Top 10 finishes in football, boys cross country, boys and girls swimming, and girls track and you have a program that is at the top of its game.

The eight Metro teams have combined for 23 Top 10 state finishes so far this season, and that's very good representation. Second-place finishes by the Jefferson girls bowling team and the Linn-Mar girls cross country team have been the best in the Metro so far.

Linn-Mar is leading the way with six Top 10 state finishes, followed by Washington with five. Five other schools have at least two each. Cedar Valley, new to the IHSAA and IGHSAA this year, is just getting started.

The Mississippi Valley Conference, of which six of the eight Metro teams are members, can take pride in the fact it is incredibly competitive. The MVC has five state titles this year. The Central Iowa Metropolitan League has six but the CIML has six more schools than the MVC.

Bettendorf wrestling and Muscatine boys swimming are the only state champions out of the Mississippi Athletic Conference.

State championships are hard to come by, to be sure. While the Metro area has been shut out so far this school year, there is still time to bring home a couple crowns. Even if that doesn't happen, the local season won't be a complete failure by any means.

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