

Uthoff: Can he really go wrong?

Written by Mark Dukes

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Either way, it seems as if Jarrod Uthoff has methodically worked himself into a winning situation.

Multiple news outlets, including Metro Sports Report, revealed over the weekend that Uthoff has trimmed his collegiate choices to Iowa State and Iowa. The former Cedar Rapids Jefferson star and former Mr. Iowa Basketball left Wisconsin in April.

His exit, or more precisely Badger Coach Bo Ryan's original restrictions on his transfer, created a national media and Internet firestorm. The situation was the topic of sports talk shows nationwide and became juicy material for columnists near and far.

Upon his leaving Wisconsin, Uthoff reportedly was considering a transfer to several schools – Iowa, Iowa State, Creighton, Marquette and Florida among them. Now, it's down to the Cyclones and Hawkeyes, two heated in-state rivals.

How can Uthoff go wrong between the two? I know, Cyclone and Hawkeye fans have their arguments and provincial opinions. But an Iowa guy is going to play in Iowa, and that's what fan bases of both schools really want from Iowa prep stars, right?

It will be a tough decision for Uthoff, who will have three years of eligibility wherever he chooses. Both schools feature exciting, engaging head coaches in Fran McCaffery in Iowa City and Fred Hoiberg in Ames. Both promote an up-tempo style of play, which Uthoff prefers. Both schools are on the rise in college basketball, Iowa State going 23-11 last season and making the NCAA Tournament and Iowa fashioning an 18-17 record and an NIT berth.

What will be the sticking points for Uthoff between the two schools? One obvious point is the scholarship situation. Uthoff would have to pay his own way in his first year at Iowa because of the Big Ten intra-conference transfer rules. Uthoff could get a scholarship immediately at Iowa State. Either way, he won't be eligible to play until the 2013-14 season.

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Uthoff's cousin, Dean Uthoff, was a star center at Iowa State in the 1970s. Dean, also a Jefferson graduate, still holds several Cyclone rebounding records. But will Dean's stardom 30-some years ago factor heavily into Jarrod's decision? Don't think so.

More than anything, I think Uthoff's decision will come down to a level of comfort with a program moreso than an available scholarship or family connection. He must be comfortable with the players with whom he will be around the next three seasons. Either way, he will be close to home, his family and friends can see him play frequently and either program would seem to suit his style of play.

Jarrold Uthoff will wake up one morning very soon and know where he wants to spend the rest of his college career. Whether it's Ames or Iowa City, it seems either one would be a winner.

(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 and FM-106.3.)