

National signing day thoughts

Written by Scott Unash

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As the snow comes down and we look forward to several days of non-stop media talk about how bad things are around Eastern Iowa, we must keep in mind one piece of good news.

At least with a blizzard, nature's weatherman, the groundhog, will not be seeing his shadow! Only four more weeks of winter. Of course, that also counts the inevitable bad weather that occurs during the week of the Girls state basketball tournament!

Now, back to sports.

This time of the year, many people turn their attention toward the topic of national signing day and how their favorite school came out in the annual stampede for the country's top talent. I also keep track of how the local colleges and universities make out on the first Wednesday of February, but to a lesser extent.

I am more interested in how the Metro area does on signing day -- how many kids sign, both with top Division I programs and with local smaller colleges to keep those athletic juices flowing for two or four more years. Not only are football players signing on the dotted line, but so are assorted other sports. Basketball comes later in April.

What I want to focus on is exactly how blessed we are in the Metro area to have had so many terrific athletes to watch and enjoy over the years, especially in football. For a Metro area the size of Cedar Rapids-Marion, with approximately 180,000 people, we have done remarkably well putting out some of the best football players around.

Look at the list over the years. We've had an NFL and Super Bowl MVP in Kurt Warner. Dedric Ward played many seasons in the NFL. And Metro athletes who played for Kirk Ferentz and the Hawkeyes recently include Allan Reisner, Rob Bruggeman and Paki O'Meara.

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That doesn't include names like Ryan Driscoll, Larry Lawrence and others who were wearing the Black and Gold before the turn of the new century. Iowa State has gotten into the act with all-Big 12 lineman Ben Lamaak. And the Metro has sent great players out of the state, such as Adrian Arrington and Blake Tiedtke.

I dare say that if you compare our Metro area with others around the country of similar size, we definitely not only hold our own, but may be among the leaders in Division I football talent. We can even brag about how things have gone statewide.

Comparing the Cedar Rapids-Marion to the Des Moines area over the past 30 years, we have produced far more players than the capitol city, which has a population probably twice that of ours.

So as another class of tremendous athletes plans their college careers, take pride in their past and future accomplishments and wish them well wherever they end up going.