

Volleyball tourney stays in Cedar Rapids

Written by Jim Ecker

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The state volleyball tournament and its \$1.8 million annual windfall are staying in Cedar Rapids.

The Board of Directors for the Iowa Girls High School Athletic Union voted 6-1 Wednesday to hold the 2011 state tournament at the Cedar Rapids Ice Arena while the U.S. Cellular Center is being remodeled.

"We are very, very grateful," said Mary Lee Malmberg, the director of Sports Tourism for the Cedar Rapids Convention and Visitors Bureau. "This is certainly a big deal for Cedar Rapids."

The IGHS AU considered other venues for the 2011 tournament, including Sioux City and Cedar Falls, but IGHS AU staff members recommended keeping the event in Cedar Rapids. The Board of Directors agreed and voted in favor at Wednesday's meeting in Des Moines, with one board member apparently favoring Sioux City.

"I think we convinced them that the Ice Arena is a viable, workable option for a one-year substitute," said Mike Dick, executive director of the IGHS AU. "It's a one-year deal, and then we fully intend to be in the U.S. Cellular Center from 2012 through 2015 for the rest of our contract."

Dick noted the "comfort level" of keeping the tournament in Cedar Rapids, in terms of local volunteers and local workers who know how to run the event, such as timers, bench workers and stat crews.

"We have a known commodity in the Cedar Rapids situation," he said. "We just felt that was huge, the consistency that we know we have there."

The state volleyball tournament has been held in Cedar Rapids since 1991. The event has generated an average of \$1.8 million in direct spending since it became a four-day event,

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according to Malmberg, and she put the total amount at \$20 million since 1991 in terms of hotel rooms, restaurants, shopping, etc.

"That's what's been dropped into our local market," she said. "It's certainly been an event to fight for. And we are certainly thrilled to death with the outcome."

The ice surface will be covered with a two-inch padding of insulated styrofoam, with volleyball courts placed on top of the padding. The two-inch padding was used successfully for the World Horseshoe Pitching tournament at the Ice Arena.

"They've assured us there won't be any slippage and we won't know the difference," Dick said.