

Finals can be emotional

By Larry Pritchett

Past PCHS activities director

The past few weeks I have had the opportunity to do some retirement-like activities. It has been four years since I retired from the school system and started this part-time, full-time, position that I am happy to have. My boss, Mr. Skeels, [I think it is a requirement that I call him Mr., not sure because most of the time I call him Jeff,] has allowed me a very flexible schedule.

I have watched a lot of Plainsmen basketball, Clipper basketball and college basketball. It has been a good time and I have the Boys State Tournament this week. A little bit of travel in there and, of course, some bad weather but all in all it has been fine.

When the boys sub-district started we chose to attend the Malcolm games and they were held at Cross County High School. First of all the four-or five-year-old consolidated school is about three miles south of Stromsburg and is a really nice facility. But it is still about 70 miles from Lincoln so it was a little travel for the two games played.

Malcolm won their sub-district with a one point win in one game and an overtime win in the other. Exciting games both nights and the 70 miles back to Lincoln wasn't so bad of a drive. Because of the forecast of bad weather the games were played on Tuesday and then Wednesday instead of Tuesday and Thursday.

We chose not to try getting out of Lincoln on Thursday because it was snowing hard, but got on the road on Friday for home. I might mention that we did brave the elements on Thursday night and got across Lincoln to see the grandsons and their parents. Got home on Friday, left again Monday to go watch the Clippers and Fremont Bergan in the District Finals and saw another pretty closely fought game but this time the Clippers lost.

When you get to the district finals, losing is tough on players, coaches, parents and fans. This game was no exception.

Now you are reading a father's report on his son's game and if you wonder if there is some bias in it, you are certainly correct.

In my years of coaching there were only a couple of times that I really thought the officiating was a little one-sided and maybe was a bigger obstacle to overcome than the other team.

Once was the first round of the State Tournament in 1971 and we played Loup City and when the game was over, one of the officials—and we only had two in those days—came to me and apologized for how bad the game was officiated. Afterwards I thought that it would have been better if he had not done that because then my thoughts had been confirmed.

Anyway the Clippers had that kind of problem and afterwards I was standing by while a sports writer was interviewing Troy. After all the usual questions, I heard him say that he had to address the elephant in the room, what did Troy think of the officiating? I was proud of my son who just said that he wouldn't comment on officiating. I know that he had some thoughts but he answered as he should.

Again as much bias as I had, my suspicions again were somewhat confirmed. But even if you think you were right and you have another person kind of confirm it and you also have a buck and a half, when it is all over you can go buy a soft drink. Nothing is going to change.

Speaking of officials, if KU wins the Big 12 for a ninth straight time, they need to thank the officials that worked their Iowa State game at Ames.

It's the Kryptonite

First of all Iowa State has to think that KU has kryptonite that works on cyclones because at Allen Field House, KU banked a three in at the buzzer to get the game into overtime and then won pretty handily.

Then last week at Ames, KU came from behind and with 4.6 seconds left in regulation, Elijah Johnson, who handled most of the kryptonite, drove the lane right into the middle of an Iowa State player and both crashed to the ground.

Now everyone is waiting for that call, charge or block. Instead there is no whistle at all on that part of the play, but as the ball is rolling around on the floor the officials call a foul on the player that Johnson crashed into, Georges Niang. That put Johnson on the line shooting free throws that tied the game.

In overtime KU again killed ISU with Johnson hitting 12 more points for a total of 39 in the game.

I am a KU fan and have been since I got to see Wilt Chamberlin play back in the 50s and as much as it hurts to say, KU won on a missed call that was so bad the Big 12 reviewed it and will hand out a penalty to the officiating crew, which is not letting them work some games in the future.

Officials are human and I have through the years probably done more than my share of trying to help them work our games. I got through my career with only a half dozen T's called and truly at least two of those were pretty weak. Never even got close to getting my money's worth, but for the most part I had a pretty good working relationship with officials.

Most of the time in a defeat, our teams made way more mistakes than did the officials. Coaches and fans have over-sized blinders on and you end up only seeing what you want to see. I only wanted to see our team be successful.

In some cases though, like the KU and Iowa State game, nine times out of ten a whistle would have blown on the drive to the basket. If it would have been a "charge" call, no one from KU would have liked it. If it would have been a "block" no one from Iowa State would have liked it, but a "no call"? It was one or the other and after watching it over and over, I am pretty sure it was a charge.

ISU does not want to go overtime with KU. In the two games KU has outscored ISU 36-16 in the overtimes. So if a charge had been called, ISU would have had the ball and only 4.6 left in the game. KU, however, still carried the kryptonite.

Today (Thursday) starts the 2013 Boys State Tournament. I think the best balanced class that should produce a lot of great games is C1.

I think Class A other than Omaha Central is maybe not as strong as in past years, but there will be lots of great games.

If you have time and you have youngsters that are playing basketball, I suggest you try to take in a day or so of the State Tournament. It is a great three days!