

Six Dragons are champs in Larry Stroh Memorial tourney

Written by Brenda Johnson Brandt

Six Dragon wrestlers climbed to the top of the award stand and two others placed third in the Third Annual Larry Stroh Memorial Tournament Saturday, Dec. 12 in Holyoke.

“Larry would have been proud,” said coach Duane Stroh of his late brother who was killed in a tragic accident Dec. 5, 2006.

Earning championships for HHS were Mark Edmonds at 112 lbs., Skyler Dittmer 130, Brian Strong 140, Cade Garrison 152, Casey Sage 171 and Luke Garrett 189.



Additionally, Frank Diaz placed third at 103 lbs., and Francisco Diaz finished third at 125.

Several Dragons were “in the hunt” for Outstanding Wrestler of the tourney, said Stroh. The honor went to Blayne Richards of Sedgwick County, who won the 135-lb. championship.

Richards pinned three of his opponents and tech-failed the fourth in the round-robin tourney involving five wrestlers. His pins were in 1:34, :45 and 1:56.

As a team, the Dragons finished two and a half points behind first-place Greeley Central.

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While it was disappointing not to win the tournament, coach Stroh said the guys wrestled well. "Hats off to Greeley Central," said Stroh, noting they had a full team and performed well.

But it was a great day for the Dragons to grow as a team, added Stroh.

Holyoke was without the services of two-time returning state champion Chad Stroh, who was taking ACT test.

Holyoke's less-experienced wrestlers were up first for the Dragons, as the more-experienced kids drew first-round byes. It started slowly.

But freshman Ben Martinez got the ball rolling for Holyoke when he pinned Elliot Towne of Evergreen. Coach Stroh noted it really turned the confidence level for the team, and was a great personal victory for Martinez, as well.

Garrison's championship marked his first as a Holyoke Dragon. He joined the team just this year, as a senior. His previous experience was at Montrose HS. And Sage earned his first-ever championship for a thrilling start to his season.

Edmonds, Dittmer, Strong and Garrett all have experience winning tournaments, but coach Stroh was especially proud of all of them for kicking off the season in a grand way.

Holyoke's effort netted the Dragons 167.5 team points, behind Greeley Central's 170. Other team standings were Broomfield 160, Evergreen 117.5, Wray 67, Wiggins 58, Sedgwick County 34 and Sterling 16.

Individual results

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Individual match results from Saturday's tournament on the home mats follow:

103 lbs.—Frank Diaz placed third. As a new wrestler, Diaz had an extremely good 3-2 tournament at Middle Park Dec. 5, which turned his focus last weekend more toward winning instead of wrestling, said coach Stroh.

He was pinned in 1:40 by Jacob Kay of Evergreen and fell in 1:18 to Jon Stelling of Broomfield. But once he calmed down, he wrestled much better, said Stroh. Diaz finished out the day by pinning Ryan Sherman of Evergreen in 1:09 to take third in the round-robin format.

112 lbs.—Mark Edmonds placed first in what coach Stroh said was an outstanding day. "In the hunt for OW (Outstanding Wrestler), Mark wrestled extremely well, with very few mistakes," said Stroh. He added no one scored on Edmonds all day.

He pinned Zach Bernardini of Broomfield in 3:21 and pinned Zach Badial of Greeley Central in 3:59.

Correction—An error was noted in Edmonds' match report from the Dec. 5 Middle Park Invitational. Edmonds was 4-1 for the day. He tech-falled Anthony Samson of Saratoga 16-1, which was incorrectly reported last week as a loss. Edmonds only loss at Middle Park was a 3-9 decision to powerful and reputable Josh Martinez of Platte Canyon.

125 lbs.—Francisco Diaz placed third. In his second tourney ever, Diaz started out apprehensively, and wasn't firm in his moves, said coach Stroh. After his first loss to the eventual tourney champion, Diaz started concentrating on wrestling, and he won all the rest of his bouts. "He really came on today, and turned a big corner," said Stroh.

Diaz lost a 6-16 major decision to Otto Maldonado of Wray, then pinned Jayden Wolf of Greeley Central in :41, won a 9-6 decision over Hanson Lackey of Greeley Central and pinned Logan Guenzi of Sterling for third.

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130 lbs.—Skyler Dittmer placed first, and finished as a definite OW candidate, said Stroh. He has started the season well, with seven matches and seven pins, three of which were earned this past weekend.

Stroh noted Dittmer has always had heart and desire and has been super limber. He's now added fundamental wrestling, and he is looking extremely good. Dittmer leads the team in number of pins and wins.

In round-robin format, Dittmer pinned Izzy Rodriguez of Greeley Central in 1:46, pinned Dan Downs of Evergreen in 5:24 and pinned Trey Robinson of Wiggins in 1:59.

135 lbs.—Leo Ortiz showed marked improvement and met a lot of his goals, said coach Stroh. He's wrestling markedly better than last year, and Stroh said he looks for big things from Ortiz in the future.

In the round-robin bracket, Ortiz was pinned in :44 by Patrick Wallace of Sedgwick County, pinned by Willy Sandau of Greeley Central in :42 and was pinned in :45 by Blayne Richards of Sedgwick County.

140 lbs.—Brian Strong placed first. Trying to do some fundamental moves, Strong found himself in trouble, but always found a way to come back, praised coach Stroh. "He's by far the most coachable he's ever been," said Stroh, adding Strong is looking good at 140 lbs.

Strong won a 12-8 decision over Todd Stultz of Greeley Central and pinned Seth King of Greeley Central in 1:03.

145 lbs.—Ben Martinez showed lots of patience in his first match of the day, even though, as a new wrestler, he was extremely nervous. "He put a monster on him and rolled him over for a big pin to get the ball rolling for Holyoke," said coach Stroh. In Martinez' first tournament, Stroh said it was great to see him get such a nice win.

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Martinez pinned Elliot Towne of Evergreen, was pinned in 2:27 by Warren Eckman of Broomfield and was pinned in 4:02 by Travis Groves of Wiggins.

152 lbs.—Cade Garrison, a senior, placed first in his first tourney as a Holyoke Dragon. He still has a nagging shoulder injury, and wrestled very cautiously, protecting that shoulder but maintaining control. “He showed lots of senior maturity and stayed in good position,” said coach Stroh.

Garrison pinned Geddy Pineda of Greeley Central in 1:14 and won a 16-1 tech fall over Kazim Mekreliyev of Greeley Central.

Coach Stroh noted they’re pleased to have Cade and his parents in Holyoke. Cade’s dad, Jack Garrison, is a volunteer assistant coach for the Dragon wrestling team.

171 lbs.—Casey Sage won his first championship ever. “He just made my weekend,” said coach Stroh. Sage wrestled in junior high, then started again last year as a sophomore. “He’s been working hard, with true grit and determination, and all of a sudden he’s just turned a corner,” said Stroh.

Saturday, he wrestled well all day long, against some quality kids, and came away with wins, noted the coach. He’s been working hard, and it’s paying off.

Sage pinned Josh Medina of Broomfield in 1:10 and won an 8-0 major decision over Tommy Groves of Wray.

189 lbs.—Luke Garrett placed first. Normally, Garrett wrestles at 171, but when coach Stroh asked him Saturday morning if he would step up to 189, he didn’t hesitate. And Stroh appreciates that strong dedication to the team.

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Garrett wrestled very well. "He has cleaned up his wrestling immensely from last year," said coach Stroh, adding he's not making nearly as many sloppy mistakes.

Garrett pinned Nick Engel of Wray in :57, pinned Nathan Frihauf of Wiggins in 4:38 and pinned DJ Skipwith of Greeley Central in 1:08.

Upcoming action

In one more wrestling outing before the holiday break, the Dragons will compete in the Old Chicago Northern Colorado Christmas Tournament at UNC in Greeley Friday and Saturday, Dec. 18-19.