

UNC Christmas Classic: good exposure for HHS wrestlers

Written by Brenda Johnson Brandt

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In a huge, well-run wrestling tournament with quality competitors, HHS performed well and gained good exposure at the Dec. 18-19 University of Northern Colorado Christmas Classic in Greeley.

Coach Duane Stroh said he was very proud of the nine Dragon wrestlers. The team finished 11th out of 58.

Stroh said they didn't finish as strong as he would have liked, but being in the huge facility with a large crowd and great competition was good exposure for everyone.

"All in all, it was a great weekend. It will get us on track, our nose headed in the right direction," added Stroh. "We needed a little bit of a reality check, and we got it."

Mark Edmonds at 112 lbs. and Chad Stroh at 135 both finished second in the UNC Classic, while Skyler Dittmer placed fourth in the 130-lb. bracket.

Some very close matches were seen by several of the Dragon wrestlers. While Stroh said there were four or five matches Holyoke could have won, he acknowledged that 10 others could have gone the other way.

Wrestling competition takes a three-week break until the Thursday, Jan. 7 league meet in Holyoke.

Coach Stroh is excited about the software used for result reporting at the UNC Classic, as Holyoke will be renting the software for the league and regional tournaments scheduled here. Stroh said live match updates will be available online with the software.

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Individual results

Individual match results from the Dec. 18-19 UNC Christmas Classic follow:

103 lbs.—Frank Diaz was 1-2 for the tourney. Coach Stroh noted Diaz and other Dragons who are new to the wrestling mats were intimidated last weekend. But, he was glad they had the opportunity for the exposure. Diaz gained confidence in his second match of the tourney and earned a quick pin for a real confidence boost.

Diaz was pinned in 1:27 by Jeremy Baca of Pueblo Central, pinned Bo-Daniel Hagans of Poudre in :50 and was pinned in 1:15 by Ryan Nafziger of Longmont.

112 lbs.—Mark Edmonds placed second, going 4-1. “He wrestled a tremendous tournament,” said Stroh. In his quarterfinal match, he handed Sonny Espinoza of Pueblo Central his first loss ever. And it took four overtimes for Edmonds to conquer his tough semifinal opponent 2-1.

Edmonds pinned Levi Rojas of Mountain View in 3:47, pinned Lance Kalley of Cheyenne East in 4:55, won a 5-2 decision over Sonny Espinoza of Pueblo Central, won a 2-1 decision over Paul Roybal of Northglenn and lost a 1-16 decision to Josh Martinez of Pine Creek in the championship.

125 lbs.—Francisco Diaz had a rough day, said coach Stroh. Diaz battled hard in his second match, but made a couple of mistakes and got caught. He was pinned in 2:33 by Nick Ortega of Northglenn and was pinned in 2:27 by Michael Simmons of Prairie View.

130 lbs.—Skyler Dittmer placed fourth, going 5-2. “He laid it all on the line and wrestled very

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hard,” said coach Stroh. Dittmer started the tourney with two pins, then had a tough 7-6 win that went into four overtimes. He came back for his fourth straight win in the quarterfinals.

Drawing a tough semifinal opponent, Dittmer got bumped down when he was pinned. He wrestled back for a 7-5 win before losing his third-fourth place match 3-4. “He wrestled his butt off for us. He just never gives up,” said Stroh.

Dittmer pinned Jacob Fisher of Fort Collins in 1:27, pinned Ryan Pellow of Palmer in 2:41, won a 7-6 decision over Nick Stager of Niwot, pinned Cameron Apodaca of Mountain Range in 5:35, was pinned in 1:56 by Jordan Henrickson of Loveland, won a 7-5 decision over Gibril Kamara of Denver South and lost a 3-4 decision to Nick Swanson of Wheat Ridge.

135 lbs.—Chad Stroh placed second, going 5-1 for the weekend. Four pins and a tech fall had Stroh looking very good, headed to the championship. Stroh led most of the final match, but came up short in overtime to lose the high-profile 4-6 match.

Stroh pinned Dominic Sigala of Widefield in 3:16, pinned Austin Lindsay of Fossil Ridge in 1:03, pinned Todd Stoltz of Greeley Central in 1:21, pinned Evan Carr of Mountain Range in 2:13, won a 15-0 decision over Justin Hays of Coronado and lost a 4-6 decision to Nick Adams of Discovery Canyon in the championship.

140 lbs.—Brian Strong was 2-2 at UNC. He started out losing a four-point decision that coach Stroh said he could have won. But Strong came back and wrestled his two best matches of the year, said Stroh. He then met up with a more experienced wrestler who ousted him from the tournament.

Strong lost a 4-8 decision to Elijah Watkins of Thornton, pinned Thomas McDaniel of Mountain View in 4:35, pinned Jeremy Bushman of Columbine in 4:21 and lost a 0-15 decision to Zach Crisel of Greeley Central.

152 lbs.—Cade Garrison went 2-2 in the tourney, forfeiting his final match when he aggravated his shoulder and couldn't continue. Coach Stroh said Garrison looked really good—“a tilting

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machine.” “We realize we can bring some more of that to the rest of our team,” added Stroh. “I was excited to see Cade compete at a pretty tough level.”

Garrison won an 18-3 match over Arron Lucero of Fort Collins, defeated Dominique Martin of Westminster 16-5, was pinned in 1:26 by Kurtis Ramsay of Windsor and forfeited to Roman Marquez of Poudre.

171 lbs.—Luke Garrett was 3-2 for the tourney. He struggled a bit in his third match of the day, but won a two-point decision in the end. In his quarterfinal match, Garrett wrestled hard with the eventual third-place finisher. He got caught for a brief couple of seconds on his back, but the ref was in the right position and it was called a pin.

Only one round from placing, Garrett wrestled a heartbreaker when he made a couple of third-period mistakes to lose 6-7.

Garrett pinned Jordan Lee of Smoky Hill in 5:15, won a 16-0 decision over Dalton Shoop of Eaton, decisioned Desmond Hernandez of Pueblo County 9-7, was pinned in 3:15 by Clay Roth of Poudre and lost a 6-7 decision to Zac Baldini of Green Mountain.

189 lbs.—Casey Sage had trouble getting his motor going, said coach Stroh. Sage was pinned in :45 by Louis Corona of Flowing Wells, Ariz. and was pinned in 2:01 by Zach Theriault of Chatfield.

Team takes 11th

Scoring 105.5 points, Holyoke finished in 11th place, only a half point from #10, a goal coach Stroh had set for the team.

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Coronado won the tourney with 278, followed by Cheyenne Central, Wyo. with 187, Mountain Range 186, Loveland 163.5, Pine Creek 150.5, Greeley West 148, Windsor 132.5, Fort Collins 128.5, Centauri 110, Brighton 106, Holyoke 105.5.

Centauri won the small school team champion award.