

Dragons host league tourney

Written by Brenda Johnson Brandt

Coming off the holiday break a little flat, the HHS wrestling team still scored 123.5 points and had two champions in the league tournament Thursday, Jan. 7.

Holyoke hosted the tournament which featured five Lower Platte Activities Association schools.

The Dragons definitely lost some matches they shouldn't have, according to coach Duane Stroh, but others wrestled well.

Mark Edmonds at 112 lbs. and Chad Stroh at 135 both earned champion honors for the Dragons Thursday night.

Runner-up honors went to Frank Diaz at 103 lbs., Cade Garrison at 152 and Luke Garrett at 171.

Third-place finishes were earned by Skyler Dittmer at 130 lbs., Brian Strong at 140 and Casey Sage at 189.

Akron, with 170.5 points, edged Wiggins with 168.5 for the team championship, while Holyoke scored 123.5, Wray 119 and Sedgwick County 44.

Individual results

103 lbs.—Frank Diaz placed second. He pinned Brennen McCool of Wiggins in 3:51 and was pinned by Austin Titus of Wray in 2:50.

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Coach Stroh noted Diaz is improving every week and is coming along pretty well. Titus is the kid to beat in the region, and Diaz wrestled him tough, getting caught in the end.

112 lbs.—Mark Edmonds placed first. He had only one match, pinning Gabe Gonzales of Akron in 3:38.

Coach Stroh said Edmonds wrestled extremely well against a top-ranked kid in 2A. With only three in his weight division, Edmonds had only one match in the tournament, which hurt the Dragons in terms of team points.

125 lbs.—Francisco Diaz was pinned by Otto Maldonado of Wray in 2:49 and lost a 5-8 decision to Justin Bull of Akron.

Diaz has been wrestling real nervously, noted coach Stroh. He started out well in his second match, but got nervous and made fundamental mistakes.

130 lbs.—Skyler Dittmer placed third. He lost a close 7-8 decision to returning state champ Blayne Richards of Sedgwick County, pinned Peyton Ritchey of Wray in 1:25 and pinned Austin Spear of Akron in 4:23.

Dittmer wrestled well against state champion Richards, losing by one point. “I look for him to be in the hunt,” said Stroh.

135 lbs.—Chad Stroh placed first. He pinned Garrett Florian of Akron in :56 and pinned Omar Martinez of Wray in 2:26.

Stroh looked really good after the holiday break, and definitely dominated the bracket. “He looked sharp all day and had fun wrestling,” said the coach.

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140 lbs.—Brian Strong placed third. He defeated Joey Jackson of Wray 18-0, lost a 3-12 decision to Tioma Frihauf of Wiggins, pinned Jason Erker of Wiggins in 4:28 and pinned Brandon Ewertz of Wiggins in :45.

Strong didn't have a good day, said coach Stroh. "But even when he's struggling, he never gives up," he added. While Stroh said it was definitely a day Strong could have competed better, in his last match he sucked up his opponent and pinned him quickly in the first minute of action.

145 lbs.—Ben Martinez edged Jared Shook of Akron 9-8, was pinned in 1:31 by Dalton Marini of Wiggins and was pinned in 4:41 by Travis Groves of Wiggins.

It was a pretty good day for Martinez, according to coach Stroh. It was good for him to battle a whole match and win, said Stroh of Martinez's first bout. He met a state-ranked wrestler next. "He had a great day, I was proud of him," said Stroh. He added Martinez is very coachable and has really improved this season.

152 lbs.—Cade Garrison placed second. He pinned Ryan Rhea of Akron in 5:20, won a 10-2 decision over Ethan Florian of Akron and was pinned in 4:44 by Aaron Erker of Wiggins.

Nursing a sore shoulder, Garrison wrestled well, said Stroh. In his last match against a top-ranked kid, his gas tank ran out, said Stroh. Garrison was ahead in the third period when he got caught and was pinned. "I'm excited about Cade's wrestling," added the coach.

171 lbs.—Luke Garrett placed second. He pinned Jack Schwinn of Wray in 2:55 and lost a 7-8 decision to Kendall Monasmith of Akron.

Garrett came out after the holiday break and was wrestling nervously, said coach Stroh. In his championship match, he was aggressive and working hard in a close, hard-fought battle. Back points not awarded as time ran out left Garrett down by one in a match Stroh said he thinks Garrett will long remember.

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189 lbs.—Casey Sage placed third. He lost a 3-6 decision to Nathan Frihauf of Wiggins, pinned Keith Larsen of Sedgwick County in 2:15, won a 13-3 decision over Nick Engel of Wray and pinned Nathan Frihauf of Wiggins in 4:07.

Sage had an outstanding day, according to coach Stroh. He started slowly, losing a three-point decision. But he picked up the pace, winning his next bout in a second-period pin and his third with a 13-3 decision. Coach Stroh noted every match Sage can go the whole distance with a win is a big improvement.

At the end of the day, Sage met up with his first-round opponent and this time totally dominated, winning by a pin in 4:07.