

Dragon wrestlers claim 3 championships at Lexington

Written by Brenda Johnson Brandt



Mark Edmonds, Skyler Dittmer and Chad Stroh claimed champion honors in their respective wrestling weight divisions to lead the Dragons to a third-place finish at the John Higgins Invitational in Lexington, Neb. Saturday, Jan. 23.

Add Stroh's honor of Outstanding Wrestler of the Tournament, and it was a great day for HHS wrestling.

In the 10 years Holyoke has been going to this tough tourney, the Dragons had claimed only three championships, so this year's achievement doubled the Dragon total.

Due to a knee injury, Edmonds wasn't even sure he would wrestle last weekend. But he competed well in his quest for the 112-lb. championship.

Dittmer pinned his way to the 130-lb. champion post in an incredible day of wrestling, said coach Duane Stroh.

Chad Stroh had an awesome day, with comments from many observers as he made his way to the 135-lb. champion stand. It was an added achievement to earn the Outstanding Wrestler award for his effort.

Edmonds and Stroh both claimed their second championship at Lexington. Former HHS

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wrestler Landon Bergner achieved a first-place finish when he competed there about five years ago.

Holyoke entered six in the A tourney at Lexington, and all six made it to the semifinals. In fact, the six wrestlers racked up enough points to place third amongst some large Nebraska and one Kansas school. None of the Dragons lost a take-down in the first round of the day.

Luke Garrett finished fourth at 171 lbs., Cade Garrison fifth at 152 and Brian Strong sixth at 140 lbs.

Coach Stroh cited three matches HHS could have won. To have only three in a tournament of that caliber felt good to the coach. Only one team had more champions than Holyoke's three.

Meanwhile, in the B tournament held the same day, Holyoke had equally as good a day. Francisco Diaz won the 125-lb. championship, Frank Diaz took fourth at 103 lbs., Ben Martinez fourth at 135 and Casey Sage sixth at 189 lbs.

Coach Stroh said the kids had a great week in practice and he cited that as the reason for Saturday's success.

In A tournament team standings, Kearney won with 246 points, followed by Scott City, Kan. with 172, Holyoke 118, Schuyler Central 117.5, Lincoln Southwest 117.5, Beatrice 103.5, Cozad 98, Millard West 96, McCook 83.5, North Platte 69, Sidney 68, Hastings 50, Lexington 41 and Chase County 18.5.

Moving ever closer to the big show at the Pepsi Center in Denver Feb. 18-20, coach Stroh is extremely excited about this weekend's competition in Garden City, Kan. Jan. 29-30.

Stroh said it sounds like this will be the toughest tournament they've ever competed in, with lots of national-caliber teams. "I feel fortunate they allowed us to come," added Stroh.

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Wrestling will begin at noon Friday, running all the way through the semis by Friday night. All consolations and of course, the finals, will be wrestled Saturday.

Individual match results from Lexington's A tournament follow:

112 lbs.—Mark Edmonds won the championship. He was pretty tight in his first match, but decisioned Alex Kough of Scott City 5-0.

He pinned Steven Hale of North Platte in 1:50 in the semis and went on to face #1 seed Asa Stansbury of Kearney. Coach Stroh said Edmonds just tore him up, controlling the whole match, winning 7-0.

130 lbs.—Skyler Dittmer placed first with three pins for an incredible day, said Stroh. He got a take-down in seven seconds in his first match and went on to pin Zak Moore of Hastings in 1:11.

Jacob Oertle of Kearney was the toughest competition in the bracket. Dittmer just never stopped moving, finally winning in a 5:38 pin late in the third period of the semifinal match. His championship bout was won with an impressive 53-second pin over Drae Swarthout of Beatrice.

135 lbs.—Chad Stroh won the championship and Outstanding Wrestler of the tourney. He looked awesome all day, said coach Stroh, starting off with a 1:58 pin over Anthony Gardner of Scott City.

In the semis, Justin Kelch of Beatrice came up with a tech-fall and pin in his favor, but Stroh handled him well, winning by a tech-fall in 5:11. Stroh managed an 8-0 lead in the championship before pinning Ryan Roach of Sidney in 3:52.

140 lbs.—Brian Strong definitely had his best tournament of the year, placing sixth, said coach

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Stroh. He started the tourney with a take-down of Zack Richter of North Platte, and turned him over and pinned him in 1:38.

Next, he battled hard against a highly-ranked Keldon Osterman of McCook in a great match. Late in the second period, he got into a scramble and put Osterman on his back for a 3:40 pin.

Strong met #1 seed Dillon Stucky of Scott City in the semis, losing 4-12. However, coach Stroh said it was a two-point match until late in the third period. Strong got called on a cross-face in the third period, and Stucky gained some quick points. Stroh explained Colorado allows more than Nebraska, and the cross-face call and ensuing loss sort of dampened Strong's spirits. "But he is wrestling very well," added the coach.

Strong finished out the tournament losing a 2-6 decision to Matt Barker of Hastings and a 9-21 decision to Rolando Gonzalez of Lexington.

152 lbs.—Cade Garrison placed fifth, going 3-2 for the day. He tilted and tech-falled Eric Engler of Beatrice in 3:23 to get the ball rolling Saturday. In a very controlled match, Garrison met up with #4 seed Josh Papa of Schuyler Central in the quarterfinals. Stroh said he wrestled a little tight, but came up with a great 4-2 win.

Nick Rimpley of Kearney, seeded first, handed Garrison his first loss with a 2:44 pin in the semis. Meeting Kohlton Price of Sidney, Garrison got caught and pinned in 3:40. He finished up meeting Josh Papa of Schuyler Central again, and won 6-0.

Garrison is looking outstanding on his feet and pretty good on top, said coach Stroh, noting he needs to work on bottom.

171 lbs.—Luke Garrett got the heart of the day award from coach Stroh. He finished in fourth place for HHS. He totally dominated Derek Klaus of Beatrice, pinning him in 3:32 to start the day. Next meeting an aggressive Bobby Cahill of North Platte, Garrett won a quick :55 pin.

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Garrett didn't have his best match in the semis, when he was pinned in 5:01 by Jensen Foss of Kearney, for his only loss by a pin this year. He went on to win an 8-0 decision over Juan Cordova of Lincoln Southwest.

Garrett lost his match for third place, 8-10, to David Matthes of Sidney. Some close calls didn't go our way, said coach Stroh, adding Garrett needs to correct a couple of things, but is looking good.

Results from the B tourney in Lexington follow:

103 lbs.—Frank Diaz placed fourth, going 4-1 and forfeiting his last match as he'd already wrestled five times.

He pinned Miguel Jaimes of Lexington in 2:40, lost a 0-7 decision to Winchester of Kearney, pinned Marcos Estrada of Hastings in 2:26, pinned Lane Carpenter of North Platte in 2:03 and pinned Brice Fairleigh of Scott City in :58.

125 lbs.—Francisco Diaz placed first with three pins. He came alive for an outstanding day, fighting off his back a couple of times for a great tournament.

He pinned Barrett Browne of Sidney in :30, pinned Nick Cullers of Cozad in 2:59 and pinned Alex Regenos of Kearney in 4:44.

135 lbs.—Ben Martinez placed fourth, going 2-2 in the tourney and doubling the number of wins in his season.

He was pinned in :46 by Ian Johnson of Sidney, won a 7-6 decision over Garrett Wibbels of Kearney, won a 14-8 decision over Chris Russell of North Platte and lost a 2-9 decision to Ian Johnson of Sidney.

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189 lbs.—Casey Sage placed sixth. He won his first match by a pin in 2:46 over Payne Schwerddeger of Lincoln Southwest, then pinned himself in 2:08 in a quarterfinal match with Dominic Sorensen of Kearney to move to the bottom of the bracket.

He pinned Brian Healey of Schuyler Central in 2:04, pinned Jesse Henne of North Platte in 2:07 and was pinned in :41 by Quinton Ross of Kearney. He defaulted to take sixth, as he'd already wrestled five matches.