

Wenger helps Prairie pin Linn-Mar

Written by Jim Ecker

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Josh Wenger has enjoyed an extraordinary week with the Cedar Rapids Prairie wrestling team.

It began this past Saturday, when Wenger broke the school record for victories and helped the Hawks capture the Geneseo Invitational in Illinois.

On Monday, he visited Grand View University in Des Moines and accepted an offer to wrestle for the three-time defending NAIA champions next year as a freshman in college.

On Thursday night, he collected a technical fall to help the fourth-ranked Hawks flatten No. 16 Linn-Mar, 52-22, in a Mississippi Valley Conference meet in the Linn-Mar gym.

That's a pretty good six-day stretch for someone who is devoted to his sport.

"He's a pretty special kid," said Prairie Coach Blake Williams.

The Hawks overpowered the Lions with seven pins and two technical falls, continuing a special

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month for Prairie that's included major titles at tournaments in Solon, Ames and Geneseo. Wenger keeps piling up the victories and now has 154 in his career, snapping the old school mark of 151 set last year by Trey Blaha.

"It's kind of cool to break the record," he said, "but you just have to take it as another win and not really let anything get in your head. Just keep rolling.

"I know what I want to do at the end of the season, so I just have to keep working towards that."

Wenger has placed fourth, fourth and fourth again at the state tournament in 2012, 2013 and 2014. Needless to say, he'd like to finish higher than fourth in his final trip to Des Moines.



Williams said Wenger is focused on the ultimate prize, even though it won't be easy in the 138-pound weight class. Wenger is currently ranked No. 2 in Class 3A, behind Danny Kelly of Cedar Falls.

"He knows his goals and our goals for him," said Williams. "He's not going to let anything get to him. He's just going to take it one match at a time and keep going from here. He's got a good head on his shoulders. And he's committed himself to the sport of wrestling, even at an early age.

"He's done a lot of off-season work and that's paid off," said Williams. "He's had such a great year, no matter what happens. He's going to go down as one of the all-time winningest. I know he'd trade that for something else in the near future, too."

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Wenger said he picked Grand View over Upper Iowa for college wrestling.

"It was definitely a tough decision, but it definitely felt most like home and I can see myself the best there, so that's what I decided to do," he remarked. "They definitely have a solid program and I just want to keep working toward that.

"Everyone there has a championship lifestyle. I'd like to feed off of that."

Wenger gravitated toward wrestling at an early age.

"In fifth or sixth grade it kind of hit me that this was a sport I was going to love forever," he said. "I just got into it and kept going."

Now he's got 154 wins at Prairie, more than anyone else in school history. "It's definitely been a long grind, but it's definitely worth it," he said.

Marcus England (106), Trenton Wennermark (113), Sam Uthoff (126), Seth Wennermark (132), Jarod Cadena (182), Tyler Pasker (195) and Taylor Mehman (220) had pins for Prairie. Wenger (138) and Jonah Manson (285) had the technical falls.

Toby Northtrup (152) had the only pin for Linn-Mar. Matt Wempen (145) won a technical fall. Noah Ajram (120) and Manny Jeffery (160) posted major decisions for the Lions. Shea Hartzler (170) won a regular decision.

PRAIRIE 52, LINN-MAR 22

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113 - Trenten Wennermark (P) pinned Charlie Petersen, 1:50
120 - Noah Ajram (LM) major dec. Dylan Kleinschmidt, 13-5
126 - Sam Uthoff (P) pinned CJ Garnett, 1:24
132 - Seth Wennermark (P) pinned Logan Dulin, 1:29
138 - Josh Wenger (P) tech fall AJ Geers, 16-1
145 - Matt Wempen (LM) tech fall Chase St. John, 16-0
152 - Toby Northrup (LM) pinned Morgan Hood, 2:53
160 - Manny Jeffery (LM) major dec. Angel Peralta, 14-0
170 - Shea Hartzler (LM) dec. Nick Hogan, 7-1
182 - Jarod Cadena (P) pinned Brayden Schultz, 1:21
195 - Tyler Pasker (P) pinned Baylor Pree, 1:03
220 - Taylor Mehmen (P) pinned Tylor Newhouse, 3:16
285 - Jonah Manson (P) tech fall James Hoff, 16-1
106 - Marcus England (P) pinned Joey Sullivan, 2:48