

Prairie claims 4th MVC title in row

Written by Jim Ecker

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The best wrestling in the Mississippi Valley Conference is happening right here in Cedar Rapids.

And the best of the best are the Prairie Hawks.

Prairie captured its fourth straight conference title Saturday by winning the MVC SuperMeet and leading a 1-2-3 finish by Cedar Rapids schools at the Prairie gym.

Jefferson finished second in the team standings and Kennedy was third. On top of that, Metro wrestlers won 10 of the 14 individual titles with Prairie, Jefferson, Kennedy, Xavier and Linn-Mar grapplers all climbing to the top of the victory stand.

"Obviously we're on an upbeat right now with the three schools finishing up high there," said Jefferson Coach Dick Briggs. "Prairie is always real good, we've been good the last few years and now Kennedy is up there. It's good to see them (the Cougars) up there as well."

Prairie changed head coaches this season, but the Hawks have not missed a beat. Blake Williams led Prairie to MVC crowns in 2012, 2013 and 2014 before moving to Solon High School, but Kane Thompson arrived from Alburnett and kept the streak alive.

"That was one thing the assistant coaches said to the kids: 'Hey, we won this three years in a row and we want to keep this going, so you guys better be ready to go,'" Thompson related. "Honestly, it's a tribute to the kids. They came ready to go."

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Prairie got individual titles from Conrad Braswell (106), Marcus England (113) and Sam Uthoff (132). Uthoff, a senior, has wrestled for the varsity all four years and has contributed to all four MVC crowns, although this was his first individual title.

"It's a great feeling," he said of the four-peat. "It's great to experience that. Every year I've been on the team we've won one, and we've kind of started our own little dynasty with winning conference titles.

"I know that before that Iowa City West had a long string (nine in a row) and we're starting our own string now."

Uthoff won his 150th career match in the semifinals and now has 151 with the Hawks. Josh Wenger set the school record last year with 169 career victories.

The Hawks were sorry to see Coach Williams leave the program after last season, but nothing has changed in terms of lofty goals and aspirations.

"We all still have the same goals," said Uthoff. "Great people come and go, and great people come in."

England, also a senior, captured his second individual title at Prairie. He wrestled on the junior varsity behind Uthoff as a freshman, but has been in the lineup the last three years.

"I just believe we have a strong program going," England remarked. "If we can keep the intensity up in the room I think the streak will continue."

Brendan Baker won his third straight title for the Jefferson J-Hawks. Baker claimed the 106-pound crown in 2014, took the 113-pound title last year and finished his varsity career with

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top honors at 120 pounds this time.

Kyle Briggs (152) and Nick Dreckman (182) also won championships for Jefferson.



The Kennedy Cougars won two titles with Nolan Hromidko (126) and Garrett Kubovec (170). Kubovec flexed his muscles to the crowd after capturing the 170-pound class with a pin on his birthday.

Josh Gerke won the 145-pound title for Xavier and Shea Hartzler took the 160-pound crown for Linn-Mar. It was Hartzler's second straight MVC title and helped Linn-Mar tie for fifth in the standings.

TEAM STANDINGS

1. Prairie 200, 2. Jefferson 189, 3. Kennedy 163, 4. Hempstead 154.5, 5. (tie) Linn-Mar 133, Iowa City High 133, 7. Iowa City West 116, 8. Xavier 101, 9. Wahlert 95, 10. Cedar Falls 94, 11. Waterloo East 67, 12. Dubuque Senior 44.5, 13. Washington 42.5, 14. Waterloo West 40.5.

CHAMPIONSHIP MATCHES

106 - Conrad Braswell (Prairie) pinned Dillon Gottschalk (Hempstead), 5:46
113 - Marcus England (Prairie) dec. Jeff Vipond (Xavier), 6-2
120 - Brendan Baker (Jefferson) tech fall Joey Harney (City High), 21-5 (2:27)
126 - Nolan Hromidko (Kennedy) major dec. Will Foreman (Washington), 12-3
132 - Sam Uthoff (Prairie) pinned Dalton Mastin (Jefferson), 3:44
138 - Nelson Brands (IC West) dec. Clint Lembeck (Xavier), 10-7

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145 - Josh Gerke (Xavier) dec. Alex Ward (Hempstead), 5-2
152 - Kyle Briggs (Jefferson) dec. Logen Rodriguez (Kennedy), 7-5
160 - Shea Hartzler (Linn-Mar) dec. Tavian Rashed (Jefferson), 6-4
170 - Garrett Kubovec (Kennedy) pinned AJ Geers (Linn-Mar), 1:31
182 - Nick Dreckman (Jefferson) major dec. Nate Kelsay (IC West), 12-3
195 - Donovan Doyle (IC West) dec. Taylor Mehmen (Prairie), 5-2
220 - Alex Freiburger (Hempstead) pinned Dalles Jacobus (Kennedy), 0:34
285 - Gannon Gremmel (Hempstead) pinned Omar Begic (Waterloo East), 1:01