

Prairie freshman upsets state champion

Written by Jim Ecker

Thursday, 26 January 2012 23:56 -

Prairie freshman Josh Wenger is only 15 years old, so maybe he doesn't know that he's not supposed to beat a state champion who will wrestle at the University of Wisconsin next year.

Maybe he doesn't care.

Wenger clipped Iowa City West senior Phillip Laux, 6-3, at 113 pounds Thursday night during their Mississippi Valley Conference meet in the Prairie gym.

Wenger didn't know Laux won the Class 3A 103-pound title last year as a junior when Wenger was still in the eighth grade.

"I didn't. Some kids told me about it," he said. "It didn't really affect me coming into tonight.

"Winning a state title is a good accomplishment for him and stuff, but now I want to do that. So we're going to be fighting for that, too."

Iowa City West beat Prairie, 38-26, in a showdown between the No. 3 and No. 4 teams in the state, but the big story was the little freshman for the Hawks.

"I'll tell ya, you say sometimes he keeps surprising you," mused Prairie Coach Blake Williams, "but it ends up not being as surprising the more he does it.

"The good thing about him, he doesn't let things get to him, he doesn't think about who he's wrestling, he just goes out and wrestles. That's key."

Wenger has an impressive 34-3 mark as a freshman and is ranked No. 3 in the state, but

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beating a state champion who will wrestle in the Big Ten next season is quite an accomplishment. Laux (36-3) is ranked No. 1 and is favored to win another state crown.

"I don't really pay much attention to any of those rankings," said Wenger. "Some kids tell me about them. I don't go on (the internet) and look at them. I don't think it really means anything. It's all how you do down at state."

Wenger appeared to take his victory over Laux in stride.

"It matters, but it's not like, 'I beat you here, so I'll automatically win down there,'" he said. "I have to fight every time."

Wenger was a state AAU runnerup last year as an eighth grader, so Williams knew he was getting a good wrestler. However, the coach wasn't sure what to expect.

"It's hard to say," Williams remarked. "You knew he was talented - and he is very talented - but it's the other things about him that I think make him a very good wrestler at an early age as a freshman.

"I would say his mentality is definitely one of his strong points. He just doesn't let things get to him and does what he does best."

Laux took a 2-0 lead with a takedown in the first period, but Wenger escaped and got a takedown of his own for a 3-2 advantage. Laux let Wenger escape to start the second period, giving the rookie a 4-2 lead.

Laux escaped to start the third period, pulling within 4-3, and it became a fight to the finish. Laux tried a risky move in the final 10 seconds, looking for a takedown and the victory, but Wenger felt it coming, fought it off and got a takedown of his own for the 6-3 verdict.

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Wenger received a standing ovation from Prairie fans and got a series of hugs from coaches and teammates. Through it all, he acted like he'd done it before and expected to win.

"I thought it was a good match," he said. "It kind of set me where I wanted to be going into the MVC and everything. I knew he was a good kid and I had to come out and wrestle hard."

Wenger and Laux could meet again in the Mississippi Valley Conference meet Saturday on Laux's home mat at Iowa City West. Ultimately, they could meet in the state tournament in Des Moines.

"I'd love to be in the finals, giving all I've got, putting me in a good spot and see how things fall from there," said Wenger.

Wenger did not have to work as hard in his second match Thursday night. He pinned Cedar Rapids Washington junior Devin Dills in 37 seconds as the Hawks drubbed the Warriors, 65-15.

Washington also lost to Iowa City West, 65-10, in the double dual. Dax Dills had a good night for the Warriors at 106 pounds, posting an 18-4 major decision over Jasmine Bailey of Iowa City West and collecting a pin in 3:30 against Zack Fiser of Prairie.

Iowa City West and Prairie split their 14 matches, 7-7, but the Trojans rolled up extra team points with five pins and two major decisions. Austin Gould had Prairie's only pin against Iowa City West at 182 pounds and Zach Witte posted a technical fall at 152.

Prairie collected nine pins and a technical fall against Washington.

IOWA CITY WEST 38, PRAIRIE 26

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132 - Dakota Bauer (ICW) major dec. Zach Becicka, 21-12.
138 - Skyler St. John (CRP) dec. Sam Chalkley, 7-3.
145 - Gradey Gambrall (ICW) major dec. Peyton Wagner, 11-3.
152 - Zach Witte (CRP) tech fall Payton Kauzlarich, 19-3 (5:22).
160 - Justin Koethe (ICW) pinned Casey Becker, 0:17.
170 - Cameron Rathje (CRP) dec. Mike Watkins, 5-4.
182 - Austin Gould (CRP) pinned Micah Kelsay, 1:35.
195 - Mickey Pelfrey (ICW) pinned J.T. Anderson, 1:40.
220 - Paul Pelfrey (ICW) pinned Trent Schulte, 4:00.
285 - Andrew Netolicky (CRP) dec. Colin Foerstner, 5-1.
106 - Zack Fiser (CRP) dec. Jasmine Bailey, 14-8.
113 - Josh Wenger (CRP) dec. Phillip Laux, 6-3.
120 - Ernest Willis (ICW) pinned Austin Erlandson, 1:49.
126 - Jack Hathaway (ICW) pinned Trey Blaha, 3:49.

IOWA CITY WEST 65, WASHINGTON 10

138 - Sam Chalkley (ICW) pinned J.P. Mercado, 1:46.
145 - Gradey Gambrall (ICW) pinned Tyler Burkle, 3:06.
152 - Payton Kauzlarich (ICW) major dec. Kaisar Herz, 12-4.
160 - Justin Koethe (ICW) won by forfeit.
170 - Mike Watkins (ICW) dec. Drake Hickok, 3-1 (ot).
182 - Micah Kelsay (ICW) major dec. Noah Williams, 10-1.
195 - Mickey Pelfrey (ICW) pinned Noah Fox, 3:47.
220 - Paul Pelfrey (ICW) won by forfeit.
285 - Tyler Burrell (CRW) won by forfeit.
106 - Dax Dills (CRW) major dec. Jasmine Bailey, 18-4.
113 - Phillip Laux (ICW) pinned Devin Dills, 1:30.
120 - Ernest Willis (ICW) pinned Trey Schuler, 4:19.
126 - Jack Hathaway (ICW) pinned Jordin Eicher, 2:35.
132 - Dakota Bauer (ICW) pinned Trevor Luebe, 0:47.

PRAIRIE 65, WASHINGTON 15

145 - Peyton Wagner (CRP) tech fall Tyler Burkle, 19-3 (4:00).
152 - Zach Witte (CRP) pinned Kaisar Herz, 2:39.
160 - Casey Becker (CRP) pinned Evan Lehrman, 1:46.
170 - Cameron Rathje (CRP) pinned Drake Hickok, 1:23.
182 - Austin Gould (CRP) pinned Noah Williams, 0:45.
195 - Trent Schulte (CRP) pinned Noah Fox, 3:51.
220 - Andrew Netolicky (CRP) won by forfeit.
285 - Tyler Burrell (CRW) dec. Tony Kavanagh, 7-3.
106 - Dax Dills (CRW) pinned Zack Fiser, 3:30.
113 - Josh Wenger (CRP) pinned Devin Dills, 0:37.
120 - Trey Schuler (CRW) pinned Austin Erlandson, 2:40.
126 - Trey Blaha (CRP) pinned Jordin Eicher, 5:00.
132 - Zach Becicka (CRP) pinned Trevor Luebe, 1:54.
138 - Skyler St. John (CRP) pinned J.P. Mercado, 3:13.

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