

Walters wins title; Hawks 3rd

Written by

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GENESEO, Ill. -- As Iowa's only representatives in a 15-team Geneseo Invitational, Prairie and Kennedy stepped up to the challenge Friday and Saturday.

Prairie finished third and Kennedy sixth in the tournament that showcases teams from Illinois, Wisconsin and Iowa.

The tournament featured top wrestlers from the tri-state area and nationally-ranked wrestlers at a number of weights. Three Illinois wrestlers pinned their way through the tournament.

Prairie had eight wrestlers place-winners. Freshman Chris Walters, who won the 119-pound weight class, and sophomore Cameron Rathje's second-place finish at 152 led the Hawks. Other place winners included Trey Blaha (103) and Andrew Netolicky (189) in third, fourth place from Peyton Wagner (160) and Alex Steenblock (171), fifth place for Jayden Flege (112), and Tyler Zacek (215) in sixth place.

"The team wrestled hard today and lost some tough matches. We're not satisfied, but we're very happy," Rathje said.

Going into the finals, Prairie was in fourth place, just three points out of third. At 103 pounds, freshman Blaha of Prairie pinned his opponent in 1:04, sealing a third-place personal finish and moving the team within one-half point of third. Prairie's highlight came when Walters won his final match with a fall in 4:47. The team overtook Normal, Ill., to earn third place.

"I expected really hard kids. I feel good about how I've wrestled," Walters said.

The advantage of wrestling out-of-state teams is that opponents are unknown.

"I like that I don't really know who they (Illinois and Wisconsin wrestlers) are," Walters said.

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Kennedy was led by champion Ryan Sheldon at 171 pounds. He dominated his final opponent and pinned him in 3:58. Sheldon pinned three of his opponents and earned a major decision over Prairie's Steenblock to raise his record to 25-1.

Sheldon is making every moment of his senior year count. He wants to "finish at the top because I don't get another chance," he said.

Kennedy's Luke Kremer finished second at 135. Kennedy's JD Ruzicka (125), Ben Feuerhelm (130) and Logan Kubovec (145) all placed fourth.

TEAMS -- 1. New Lenox Providence 173.5; 2. Arrowhead, Wis. 171; 3. Prairie 153; 4. Normal Community 146.5; 5. Granite City 114; 6. Kennedy 107.5; 7. Chatham Glenwood 107; 8. Geneseo 104; 9. Washington, Ill. 101; 10. O'Fallon 97.5; 11. Moline 93.5; 12. Palos Hills Stagg 92; 13. United Township 69; 14. Chicago Heights Marian 58; 15. Belvidere 28.5

CHAMPIONS

103—Andrew Crone (ARR); 112—Adam Hay (MOL); 119—Chris Walters (CRP); 125—Eddie Klimara (NLP) [lower-weight wrestler of the meet]; 130—Adam Yde (ARR); 135—Jake Gregerson (GRC); 140—Jake Sueflohn (ARR); 145—Edwin Cooper (NLP) [2nd in Nation]; 152—Nate Jackson (CHM); 160—Dylan Reel (WASH); 171—Ryan Sheldon (CRK); 189—Shane Hughes (ARR); 215—Steve Monaco (PHS); 285—West Cathcart (GEN) [Heavier-weight wrestler of the meet].

PLACE WINNERS

KENNEDY -- Second: Luke Kremer (135); fourth: JD Ruzicka (125), Ben Feuerhelm (130), Logan Kubovec (145).

PRAIRIE -- Second: Cam Rathje (152); Third: Trey Blaha (103), Andrew Netolicky (189); fourth:

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