

Streicher on Northrup: 'He's one of our family'

Written by Jim Ecker

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DES MOINES -- Linn-Mar wrestling coach Doug Streicher stands solidly behind Joel Northrup, his 112-pounder who forfeited a match to a girl at the state tournament.

"He's one of our family," Streicher said Saturday at Wells Fargo Arena. "He does everything we ask him to do and he's a good kid. This doesn't change his status on our team one bit."

Northrup declined to wrestle Cassy Herkelman of Cedar Falls in the opening round on Thursday, possibly costing the Lions precious points in the team standings.

"It's a special situation that we're not commenting on and we stand by him," said Streicher.

Northrup, who is home-schooled, cited religious beliefs for not wrestling against Herkelman, who became the first girl to win a match in state tournament history.

Linn-Mar finished the consolation round Saturday afternoon in 15th place in the team standings, well short of its goal of cracking the top-10. The Lions brought eight wrestlers to Des Moines, but six of them lost in the first round.

Streicher said he's not sure if Northrup's situation affected the team's performance or not.

"I really can't tell you," he said. "I thought we were ready; I thought we had a good week of practice."

"A very odd week," he concluded.

Northrup lost in the wrestlebacks and was eliminated from the tournament on Friday, but he

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stayed in Des Moines and supported his teammates on Saturday.

It was a tough week for Linn-Mar, but freshman Alijah Jeffery gave the Lions something to cheer about Saturday when he finished third at 103 pounds.

Jeffery defeated Andrew Steiert of Waverly-Shell Rock, 8-2, to finish the tournament with a 5-1 record. His only loss was a 2-0 verdict to Phil Laux of Iowa City West in the quarterfinals.

"It feels pretty good, but I'd much rather be first," said Jeffery. "I got stuck with a tough kid the second round."

Jeffery finished his rookie campaign in high school with a 42-5 record. "I feel good about how I did," he said. "I'll come back next year and try to do even better."

Jeffery was a state AAU champion last year and nearly duplicated that performance as a ninth grader in high school.

"He had a heck of a year," said Streicher. "He wrestled well down here, even the match he lost."

Luke Kremer of Kennedy claimed third place at 135 pounds Saturday with a solid 10-6 victory over Steve Gutschenritter of Glenwood. Kremer, a junior, finished the year with a 41-4 record.

"It feels pretty good," Kremer said about finishing third. "It's second-best if you get beat in the quarterfinals."

Kremer dropped a tough 2-1 decision to Jay Hildreth of Lewis Central on a last-second escape in the quarterfinals. The bout appeared headed for overtime, but the two mat officials conferred and ruled Hildreth escaped before the end of the third period.

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Kremer was visibly upset by the defeat, but composed himself and came all the way back for third place. He said it was "really hard" to accept that loss.

"I had to put it out of my mind and not think about it," he said. "What happened happened."

Braxton Chichelly of Xavier was defeated by Adam Perrin of North Scott, 15-5, Saturday in the consolation round and finished fourth at 130 pounds for the Saints.

Ryan Sheldon of Kennedy stopped Mitch Wantock of Linn-Mar, 11-2, in the battle for fifth place at 171 pounds.

Andrew Netolicky of Prairie was pinned by David Demmer of Western Dubuque in 2:59 and placed sixth at 189 pounds.

Tyler of Burrell of Washington was pinned by Pedro Gomez of Marshalltown in 1:14 and finished sixth at 285 pounds.

Linn-Mar freshman Ross Lembeck trimmed Ty Miller of West Des Moines Valley, 4-2, to claim seventh place at 135 pounds.

Prairie ended the consolation round tied for 12th in the Class 3A team standings. Linn-Mar was 15th and Kennedy was tied for 17th.