

Jeff matmen honor McNiel with big win

Written by Jim Ecker

Thursday, 23 January 2014 22:46

The Jefferson wrestling team dragged out their old-fashioned uniforms from the 1970's Thursday night to honor Hall of Fame coach Bill McNiel.

Then the J-Hawks gave Kennedy an old-fashioned whipping, leggings and all.

Jefferson collected four pins, a technical fall and a major decision while piling up a 66-12 victory in a Mississippi Valley Conference meet at Jefferson.

McNiel, 74, led the J-Hawks to state wrestling titles in 1973 and 1974, rolled up a 105-24-1 record in dual meets during his 11-year career and was inducted into the National Wrestling Hall of Fame in 1998. He and his wife, Judy, were honored in a ceremony that featured former wrestlers, assistant coaches, students, friends and opponents.

"It was great. Amazing there were that many people that were here," said McNiel, who lives just a few blocks from Jefferson. "It's pretty overwhelming."

The J-Hawks were happy to have him in the audience.

"With him being here tonight, it was a little more inspiration. It was his night," said Will Orr, who recorded a pin in 72 seconds at 285 pounds.

Jefferson, ranked ninth by the Iowa Wrestling Coaches Association, raised its dual meet record to 9-0. The J-Hawks have whipped No.4 Linn-Mar and No.6 Iowa City West, and they've finished ahead of other ranked teams in tournaments.

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These J-Hawks with their scrappy style are starting to remind people of McNiel's J-Hawks in the 1970's. "People are comparing us to them, kind of in a way," said Orr. "So we have some high expectations."

McNiel has not been the Jefferson coach in 36 years, but the J-Hawks know who he is and appreciate his legacy. They wanted to put on a show Thursday for him.

"It made it special," said Kelly May, who pinned his man in 39 seconds at 152 pounds. "I'm sure it was a lot of fun for him to come back and see us and wearing the clothes that he used to coach."

May was glad his match ended quickly so he didn't have to wrestle more than 39 seconds in those leggings. "They were pretty uncomfortable," he said.

Jefferson Coach Dick Briggs was one of McNiel's wrestlers during the glory years in the 1970's. He was delighted to have a chance to honor his former coach.

"It was pretty special tonight," said Briggs. "It was pretty neat to see all of the people who thought so much of Bill, and not only from our J-Hawk community. People came from all over."

McNiel follows Jefferson athletics and occasionally attends events. He's happy to see what's been happening at Jefferson in recent years, because it reminds him a little of the past.

"It was a good atmosphere at Jeff in those days," he said. "I think maybe I'm starting to see the kids here having kind of an attitude turnaround here where it's more positive than it has been for awhile."

Nick Dreckman (170) and Dalton Kuehl (220) had pins for Jefferson. Tavian Rashed (145) posted a technical fall, Luke Sedlacek (160) had a major decision and Matt Culver (138) won a regular decision.

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Kennedy got pins from Logen Rodriguez (126) and Kobi Cowen (132). The Cougars forfeited five matches.

JEFFERSON 66, KENNEDY 12

132 - Cowen (K) pinned Moncivais, 3:16.
138 - Culver (J) dec. Losch, 3-2.
145 - T.Rashed (J) tech fall Winders, 25-8.
152 - May (J) pinned Kubovec, 0:39.
160 - Sedlacek (J) major dec. Pape, 15-4.
170 - Dreckman (J) pinned Nolan, 1:32.
182 - Hovey (J) won by forfeit.
195 - Allen (J) won by forfeit.
220 - Kuehl (J) pinned Hoover, 1:30.
285 - Orr (J) pinned Brunk, 1:12.
106 - Baker (J) won by forfeit.
113 - Sibomana (J) won by forfeit.
120 - Mastin (J) won by forfeit.
126 - Rodriguez (K) pinned Briggs, 5:24.