

J-Hawks claim district wrestling title

Written by Jim Ecker

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Cedar Rapids Jefferson Coach Dick Briggs looked like a one-armed ticket peddler at a popular sports event Saturday night, trying to meet demand and stuffing money in his pocket as quickly as he could until all the precious seats were gone.

Briggs had a tiny allotment of 60 tickets to sell for the state wrestling tournament in Des Moines next week and Jefferson fans lined up to get as many as possible.

They sold like hotcakes at \$8 apiece.

"I'll try to get some more," he told disappointed parents and fans after he ran out.

The Jefferson wrestling community was in a buying mood Saturday after the fifth-ranked J-Hawks topped No.4 Linn-Mar for the Class 3A district title at the Jefferson gym.

Fans can buy tickets at Wells Fargo Arena in Des Moines for the sessions on Thursday and Friday, but the state finals on Saturday night are technically a sellout.

Briggs will be in full-scrounge mode this coming week and will be happy to do it.

Jefferson won two individual district titles Saturday and qualified seven wrestlers for the state tournament for their best showing in years. The J-Hawks defeated Linn-Mar, 225.5 to 186, for the team crown.

"It's awful cool," Briggs said when he was finished selling. "I'm so happy for our seven qualifiers. It's been awhile since we've been district champs, I'll tell you that."

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"We came in thinking we had a pretty good shot at it," he said. "It's fun when it happens, though."

Jefferson co-head coach Matt Orton said it was the J-Hawks' first district title since 1994.

Brenden Baker captured the 106-pound title for Jefferson and Josh Allen claimed the 182-pound crown. Kyle Briggs (120), Tavian Rashed (145), Kelly May (152), Luke Sedlacek (160) and Dalton Kuehl (285) all placed second for the J-Hawks to earn free trips to Des Moines.

"I've been down there and I've always wanted to be a part of it," said Allen, who will be making his first appearance in the state tournament. "It's a crazy atmosphere and I can't wait."

This has been a special year for Jefferson. The J-Hawks are ranked No.5 by The Predicament and No.7 by the Iowa Wrestling Coaches Association. They'll participate in the state dual meet tournament Wednesday for the first time in 20 years and then will have a sizable contingent in the individual state tournament that starts Thursday.

"It's a good thing to come to us," said Allen. "I'm very excited. It hasn't happened in a long time, and it's definitely good for the team."

The Linn-Mar Lions won four individual district titles and qualified seven wrestlers for the state tournament, but Coach Doug Streicher had been hoping for more. Toby Northrup, a ranked wrestler at 145 pounds, missed the district meet due to an injury. Sam Nowak, a solid wrestler at 220 pounds, had to default Saturday after sustaining an injury and failed to qualify.

"It's one of those years," said Streicher.

Alijah Jeffery (120), Damon Griffin (126), Ross Lembeck (152) and Shea Hartzler (160) won district titles for Linn-Mar. Noah Ajram (113), Matt Wempen (132) and Andrew Holladay (195)

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also qualified.

The Xavier Saints claimed four district titles with Clint Lembeck (132), Nick Drahozal (145), San lckes (170) and Cole Turner (285) all climbing to the top of the victory stand.

"I feel good," Coach Ryan Chambers said after the Saints finished fourth out of eight teams in the standings. "I'd like to take a couple of other kids, but I can't complain about four."

Nolan Hrmidko took the 113 title for Kennedy as Metro wrestlers won 11 of 14 weight classes. Cedar Rapids Prairie also had a good day Saturday, winning the district title in Newton.

"Metro wrestling is unbelievable," said Chambers. "It's like a mini-state tournament."

Logen Rodriguez placed second at 126 pounds for Kennedy to earn a trip to state. Trey Schuler finished second at 138 pounds for Washington to qualify.

TEAM STANDINGS

1. Jefferson 225.5, 2. Linn-Mar 186, 3. Cedar Falls 168.5, 4. Xavier 147, 5. Waterloo West 137, 6. Kennedy 93.5, 7. Waterloo East 80, 8. Washington 33.

CHAMPIONSHIP BOUTS

106 - Brenden Baker (CRJ) pinned Kyler Lowe (WE), 1:38.
113 - Nolan Hromidko (CRK) dec. Noah Agram (LM), 7-1.
120 - Alijah Jeffery (LM) pinned Kyle Briggs (CRJ), 0:40.
126 - Damon Griffin (LM) dec. Logen Rodriguez (CRK), 8-4.
132 - Clint Lembeck (CRX) dec. Matt Wempen (LM), 5-3.

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- 138 - Daniel Kelly (CF) pinned Trey Schuler (CRW), 1:27.
- 145 - Nick Drahozal (CRX) dec. Tavian Rashed (CRJ), 7-2.
- 152 - Ross Lembeck (LM) tech fall Kelly May (CRJ), 18-2 (5:05).
- 160 - Shea Hartzler (LM) dec. Luke Sedlacek (CRJ), 5-1.
- 170 - Sean Ickes (CRX) dec. Drew Langel (CF), 6-4.
- 182 - Josh Allen (CRJ) pinned Jamiir Moore (WE), 0:42.
- 195 - Marcus Harrington (WW) pinned Andrew Holladay (LM), 4:27.
- 220 - Kyler Mathews (WW) major dec. Devon Davis (CF), 16-2.
- 285 - Cole Turner (CRX) dec. Dalton Kuehl (CRJ), 3-2.