

Garcia 'Outstanding;' Lions finish 3rd at MVC

Written by Jim Ecker

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Amid all the grim-faced and tight-lipped wrestlers at the Mississippi Valley Conference tournament Saturday stood A.J. Garcia, the 215-pounder from Linn-Mar.

He was all smiles.

Garcia upset top-ranked Conner Herman of Cedar Rapids Jefferson to win the 215-pound crown and was named the Outstanding Wrestler in the 14-team field at Xavier.

"I was ready to go for that match," he said. "It's a real big accomplishment for me."

Garcia dominated Herman, 9-3, in the biggest upset of the day, handing Herman his only loss of the season to a fellow 215-pounder.

"I'm building my way up toward state," said Garcia. "This is going to motivate me."

Garcia, ranked No. 8, raised his record to 38-4 and led seven Metro wrestlers to the top of the victory stand at Ron Thillen Gymnasium.

Iowa City West crowned seven individual champions and won the MVC tournament for the eighth straight year with 264.5 points.

"Their kids are on a different level," remarked Kennedy Coach Brent Paulson. "They're beating everyone here by 100 points, and I consider it a pretty good conference."

The Trojans, the top-ranked team in the state, finished 89 points ahead of Prairie (175.5). Linn-Mar placed third in the team standings, Kennedy fourth, Jefferson sixth, Xavier eighth and

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Washington ninth.

Linn-Mar, Kennedy and Washington all claimed two individual titles and Prairie nabbed the other.

Mark Atwater captured the 189-pound title for Linn-Mar with a 3-2 verdict over sixth-ranked Mickey Pelfrey of Iowa City West in the finals. Atwater also beat 10th-ranked Andrew Netolicky of Prairie, raising his record to 16-7 despite a hand injury that knocked him out of the lineup for several weeks.

"I'm ready to go full speed now," he said.

Luke Kremer (135) and Ryan Sheldon (171) won titles for Kennedy. Kremer, ranked No. 1 in the state, beat Shane Broderick in the finals for his second straight MVC crown.

"It feels pretty good," said Kremer, "considering we're getting into the heat of things with districts and state left."

Sheldon pinned his way to the 171-pound championship with three straight falls in 1:54, 2:52 and 3:52.

"It can't get much better," he said. "I knew I was the favorite in the tournament and I just wanted to do the best I could."

Sheldon won his first MVC title as a senior and is 34-1 this season, with his only loss coming against a nationally ranked wrestler from Minnesota.

The Washington Warriors claimed two titles with Troy Neagle taking the 112-pound

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championship and Tyler Burrell prevailing at 285 pounds with three straight shutouts. Neagle pinned ninth-ranked Ernest Willis of Iowa City West in the semifinals and dominated Jayden Flege of Prairie in the final round.

"The coaches told me to go out there and get after it, and that's what I did," said Neagle. "To win this, it means so much."

Neagle did not have to face Linn-Mar's Joel Northrup, a 2010 MVC champ who missed this year's tournament due to illness.

Nobody scored a point on Burrell all day as he won 3-0, 1-0 and 7-0, with the title coming against Chantz Rodriguez of Xavier. "It feels good. It feels really good," he said.

Zach Witte won the 145-pound title for Prairie for the second straight year, this time with a 3-2 victory over Garrett Hathaway of Iowa City West in the finals. Witte, ranked fourth, raised his perfect record to 30-0. He'd like to keep his mark unblemished all the way through the state tournament.

"Anything is possible, I guess that's the way I look at it," he said. "That's what I'm shooting for. That's what everyone is shooting for."

TEAM SCORES

1. Iowa City West 264.5, 2. Prairie 175.5, 3. Linn-Mar 140, 4. Kennedy 125, 5. Hempstead 95, 6. Jefferson 91.5, 7. Cedar Falls 89.5, 8. Xavier 89, 9. Washington 86, 10. Dubuque Wahlert 77, 11. Iowa City High 75.5, 12. Dubuque Senior 69, 13. Waterloo West 66, 14. Waterloo East 22.

CHAMPIONSHIP MATCHES

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103 -- Laux (ICW) tech fall Blaha (CRP), 20-5; 112 -- Neagle (CRW) dec. Flege (CRP), 10-3; 119 -- Wakefield (ICW) major dec. Walters (CRP), 9-1; 125 -- Hathaway (ICW) pinned Vance (DW), :46; 130 -- Bauer (ICW) dec. Chicchelly (CRX), 10-6; 135 -- Kremer (CRK) dec. Broderick (DW), 4-1; 140 -- Sullivan (ICW) major dec. Rodriguez (CRK), 17-9; 145 -- Witte (CRP) dec. Hathaway (ICW), 3-2; 152 -- Thompson (ICW) pinned Smith (DH), 1:25; 160 -- Koethe (ICW) dec. Hamm (ICH), 5-1; 171 -- Sheldon (CRK) pinned Ickes (CRX), 3:52; 189 -- Atwater (LM) dec. Pelfrey (ICW), 3-2; 215 -- Garcia (LM) dec. Herman (CRJ), 9-3; 285 -- Burrell (CRW) dec. Rodriguez (CRX), 7-0).

3RD PLACE MATCHES

103 -- Jeffery (LM) pinned Lynn (DS), 1:17; 112 -- Willis (ICW) dec. Betwell (DS), 8-6; 119 -- Lynn (DS) major dec. Drahozal (CRX), 12-4; 125 -- Ruzicka (CRK) pinned Eicher (CRW), 2:46; 130 -- Showalter (WW) dec. Carson (CRJ), 10-5; 135 -- Lembeck (LM) major dec. Wilkens (CF), 11-2; 140 -- Brimeyer (DH) dec. Pederson (LM), 11-8; 145 -- Moenck (CRJ) def. Regenwether (LM), injury default; 152 -- Rathje (CRP) dec. Kohlmeyer (WW), 7-1; 160 -- Groomes (CF) dec. Helgeson (WE), 10-4; 171 -- Dailey (ICH) dec. Brauer (WW), 7-1; 189 -- Netolicky (CRP) dec. Berendes (DH), 6-0; 215 -- Fritsch (DH) dec. Gingerich (ICH), 1-0; 285 -- Brunscheen (CRP) dec. Foerstner (ICW), 2-0.

5TH PLACE MATCHES

103 -- Feldman (DH) pinned Bollman (CRJ), 1:11; 112 -- Herkelman (CF) major dec. Lemus (ICH), 14-2; 119 -- Berry (LM) dec. Rashed (CRJ), 8-1; 125 -- Becicka (CRP) dec. Downey (CRX), 7-5 OT; 130 -- Severin (LM) dec. Whitters (CRP), 7-5 OT; 135 -- Luebe (CRW) dec. Laska (CRX), 12-9; 140 -- Dagit (CF) dec. Haynes (DW), 6-0; 145 -- White (DW) dec. Kubavec (CRK), 4-2; 152 -- Williams (CRK) pinned Digmann (LM), 3:55; 160 -- Wagner (CRP) major dec. Harrington (WW), 9-0; 171 -- Steenblock (CRP) dec. Langely (CF), 5-0; 189 -- Welsh (CRJ) pinned Rahnavardi (CF), 1:42; 215 -- Moore (WW) dec. Hirsch (CF), 3-2; 285 -- Barry (DS) def. Arensdorf (DH), injury default.

7TH PLACE MATCHES

103 -- Schuler (CRW) def. Waterhouse (CRK), injury default; 112 -- Lange (DW) received bye;

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119 -- Muir (DW) def. Rockwell (CRW), 8-7; 125 -- Kolyvanov (ICH) major dec. Alexander (CF), 15-6; 130 -- Brummel (CF) dec. McGovern (DH), 7-4; 135 -- Day (CRP) dec. Hasler (ICH), 5-4; 140 -- Becker (CRP) pinned Herz (CRW), 2:30; 145 -- Martin (WW) dec. Matthias (CF), 8-3; 152 -- Love (WE) dec. Mahone (ICH), 10-8; 160 -- Knier (DW) dec. Baskerville (CRK), 2-1; 171 -- Watkins (ICW) pinned Veach (DW), 2:58; 189 -- Ferentz (ICH) pinned Powers (DS), 3:25; 215 -- Beasley (ICW) pinned Blus (DS), :57; 285 -- Vesey (CRJ) pinned Smith (LM), 2:49.