

Five state placers ties school record

Written by Brenda Johnson Brandt

Holyoke placed five wrestlers in the Feb. 18-20 Colorado State Tournament and captured fourth place, tying two school records with the effort.

Both the number of placers, as well as the fourth-place ranking, tie the 1981 records in the HHS books. Holyoke also placed five wrestlers one year ago, in 2009 at the Pepsi Center in Denver.

Considering the team only took five qualifiers, it was an awesome tournament for Holyoke, finishing with 112 team points, two state champions, two third places and a fourth place.

Senior Chad Stroh (135 lbs.) marked his third straight state championship and sophomore Mark Edmonds (112 lbs.) joined the state champion ranks.

Seniors Luke Garrett (171) and Cade Garrison (152) won their first two matches to guarantee a state placing. After losing in the semis, both came back to win two more for third-place honors.

Junior Skyler Dittmer (130 lbs.) won his first match, but fell in the quarterfinals. It was a hard climb back, but the determined wrestler won three straight to earn the right to wrestle for third and fourth, where he placed fourth.

Coach Duane Stroh was incredibly proud of his entire state team, and praised their effort this past weekend.

With the season now behind him, Stroh said it's been a real topsy-turvy year, where they've fought through lots of injuries and had to cancel a tough tournament due to injuries.

"But it's also been a real rewarding year," said Stroh. "It's fun to go through all the challenges and see the kids still manage to give a performance like they did at the state tournament."

Stroh expressed sincere thanks to the dedicated parents and sponsors who paid for hotels and food throughout the season when the team made overnight trips for tournaments. He also

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acknowledged the Booster Club and cheerleaders.

Support from the community at the state tournament was strong as Dragon fans cheered the green and gold. Fans were certainly rewarded by the wrestling performance.

Wrestling strong in N.E. Colo.

Strength of the wrestling program in Northeast Colorado was seen in many weight classes, as well as the final team scores.

Burlington and Wiggins battled for team champ honors, and it came down to the heavyweight match at the end of the night.

Burlington held a slight lead, but the final match of the night featured Wiggins' undefeated Kyle Pollock and Cougar Isaiah Churchwell with a 32-2 record going into the finals.

Churchwell pulled off the 4-3 upset to not only win a state championship for himself, but to finalize the honor for his team.

The Cougars scored 167 to take the team title, followed by Wiggins 160, Paonia 117, Holyoke 112, Hayden 76, Rangely 75, Merino 73, Rocky Ford 69.5, Akron 68.5, Fowler 66.5, Holly 62, Wray 53, Antonito 43, Eads 42, Dove Creek 39.5 and Nucla 36 to round out the top 16.

A total of 60 teams competed in the 2A state competition.

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