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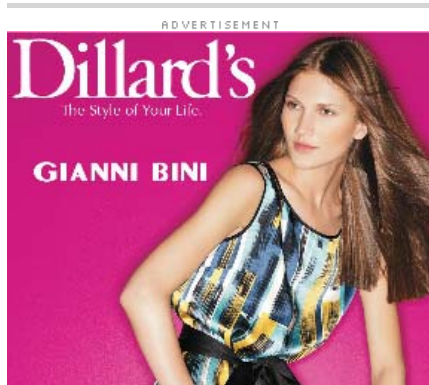
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West crowns two state wrestling champs

ANDY HAMILTON • IOWA CITY PRESS-CITIZEN • FEBRUARY 22, 2009

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DES MOINES -- Move over the deer head.



There's another state wrestling championship bracket sheet on its way to Dylan Carew's bedroom, and the buck is about to get passed on the West High senior's list of favorite wall ornaments.

"There's a spot (for the bracket sheet) right next to a deer head," Carew said. "It's been waiting for a state title for a while."

Carew's three-year hunt for an elusive second state championship ended Saturday night when he captured the Class 3A 140-pound title with a 12-3 major decision victory against Des Moines Roosevelt's Blake Meeks in front of 15,439 at Wells Fargo Arena.

Carew won his first title in 2006 as a baby-faced freshman at 103 pounds. The bracket sheet from that tournament still hangs on one wall in his bedroom. But the pursuit of a second title left the Iowa recruit with an empty feeling during the past two seasons, not to mention the empty space next to the head of the 10-point buck he shot a couple years ago.

"I didn't want to be remembered," Carew said, "as a one-time state champion who won it as a freshman."

West junior Nick Moore remained on track to be remembered as one of Iowa's all-time high school greats, even if Saturday night won't go down as one of his greatest performances.

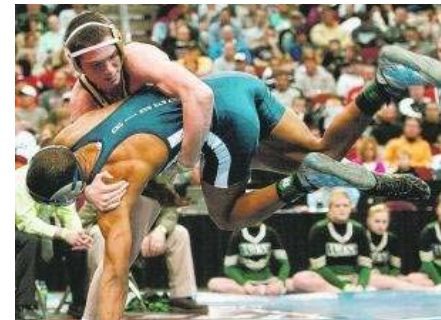
With his 2-1 victory against Urbandale's Josiah South in the 152-pound final, Moore became the 66th wrestler in state history to win three titles and West's first three-timer.

Moore will have an opportunity next year to become Iowa's 19th four-time state champion. He got a glimpse of what could be like Saturday night when Don Bosco's Bart Reiter won his fourth title at 135 pounds in Class 1A.

"I heard everyone cheering for him, the whole crowd," Moore said. "I kind of whispered to myself, 'I'd like that.' That's what I want, but I've got more things to work on now before I get the fourth. I'll be watching that match for a while, fixing things."

Top-ranked senior Kyle Kober (44-0) became West Branch's first state champion when he completed pinning his way through the tournament with a second-period fall against Don Bosco's Cory Becker in Class 1A heavyweight final.

"It's really special to me," Kober said. "No one from West Branch has ever done it. We've had some pretty good wrestlers, but we're not known for our wrestling. It really boosts my confidence and hopefully it helps out our wrestling program."



Press-Citizen / Matthew Holst

West High's Dylan Carew takes down Des Moines Roosevelt's Blake Meeks in the Class 3A 140-pound state championship match Saturday night at Wells Fargo Arena in Des Moines.

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Williamsburg sophomore Austin Blythe (46-1) climbed to the top of the awards podium Saturday night after pinning West Liberty's Javier Rendon (26-8) in the 2A heavyweight final. Blythe's bid to become the first freshman heavyweight champion in state history fell short in last year's finals, but the top-ranked Raider said he was driven to climb one step higher on the medal stand.

"I've been thinking about it for 365 days and I wasn't going to go another 365 without getting that gold medal," Blythe said. "I kind of dwelled on (last year's championship match defeat) for maybe a week or so. The next day after I lost it really hit me and I was pretty down. But after that, I set my mind to it, I lifted hard, trained hard and I didn't think about it at all this week. I had my mind on one thing and that was winning the gold medal."

West Liberty senior Tomas Lira (34-3) had his title bid ended in the Class 2A finals for the second straight year at 189 pounds. West Delaware's Carl Broghammer fought off his back in the first period and fought back from a five-point deficit to win an 8-5 decision.

Williamsburg's Austin Blythe and West Branch's Kyle Kober capped their fantastic seasons with falls in the heavyweight finals. Blythe (46-1) decked West Liberty's Javier Rendon (26-8) in the first period of the 2A finals. Kober (44-0) pinned his way through the 1A tournament, finishing with a fall over Don Bosco's Cory Becker, to become the first state champion in West Branch history.

Solon junior James Morris finished fourth in the Class 2A 215-pound division, and Williamsburg freshman J.C. Vercande placed eighth in Class 2A at 103.

West added to its collection Saturday night. But the Trojans entered the 3A tournament with hopes of having more to celebrate than just the two individual titles. Even Carew and Moore were disappointed afterward.

"You're happy for two guys, but if you ask them, they're not happy," West coach Mark Reiland said. "Nick's not happy with his performance and Dylan's not happy with his performance the last two years. He really believed, and rightfully so, that he should've been there four years. I don't know that any of our kids are sitting there right now happy with where they ended up, and the reality is, some of them had pretty good tournaments."

The Trojans had hopes of bringing home their third state team title. But West tumbled from the top of the standings during Friday's semifinals and entered the tournament's final day trailing top-ranked Waverly-Shell Rock by eight points.

The Trojans couldn't overcome the deficit in Saturday afternoon's consolation finals and the Go-Hawks clinched their second straight 3A title during Saturday night's finals. Waverly-Shell Rock finished with 146.5 points.

West wrapped up second place with Moore's victory, finishing the tournament with 138.5 points.

"You sit here and see where the team's at and there are 62 other teams who would trade with us," Reiland said. "We scored 138.5 and we're sitting here wondering what went wrong. If you would've told us coming in that we'd have seven semifinalists, we'd have been tickled."

West senior Derek St. John, the nation's top-ranked 160-pounder, bounced back from getting upset in semifinals by notching two falls to place third. The Trojans got another third from freshman Jack Hathaway (103), fourths from Justin Koethe (135) and Matt Behnami (215) and a sixth from David Solis (171).

"I honestly did better than I thought I would," said Behnami, an unranked senior, who reached the medal stand for the first time. "I'm kind of mad I didn't finish strong and get the win for third, but I can't really complain with fourth. If anyone would've said I'd be at the state tournament getting fourth I would've said they're crazy."

Carew and Moore, though, fully expected to be on Saturday night's big stage. Carew (28-1) controlled Meeks in every possible way, scoring three takedowns, a pair of points for stalling, tossing the fifth-ranked Roosevelt junior to his back with a second-period pancake and giving Meeks all three of his points on escapes.

"That's the way the match should go," said Carew, who scored two pins and a technical fall on his way to the finals. "I'd like to have finished the match before six minutes, but I guess bonus points in the state finals isn't too bad."

"It's easy when you get going like that. I was on a roll. I was tired, but it's so easy to go, go, go when you've got that mentality going. You think you're invincible."

For the most, Moore has been throughout his high school career. He raised his record to 127-1 and extended his winning streak to 95 with Saturday night's victory.

Moore (45-0) scored a reversal midway through the second period and rode South the rest of the way, getting called for stalling on top with 14 seconds remaining in the match to provide South with his only point.

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"I'm sure he's not impressed nor am I, but I guess you do what you (have to) do," Moore said. "Nobody's really impressed with that match. Probably the most boring match of all of tonight."

Reach Andy Hamilton at 339-7368 or ahamilton@press-citizen.com.

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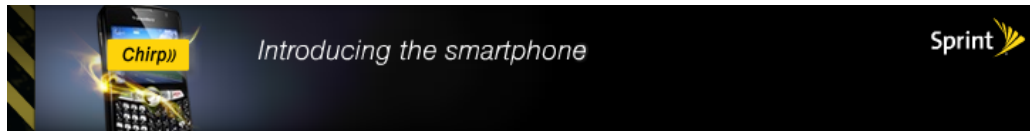
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