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Trojans playing catch-up Iowa City West 12 points behind fast-starting Waverly-SR

DES MOINES — It's going to be tough for the tortoise to catch the hare this time.

But Iowa City West didn't mind sporting the green shell after the first round of the Class 3A state wrestling tournament Thursday at Wells Fargo Arena.

Top-ranked Waverly-Shell Rock burst to a hare-like start, placing 12 in today's quarterfinals and scoring 38 points. West is 12 points back after advancing seven.

"We have a lot of work to do. There's a lot of tournament left," West Coach Mark Reiland said. "It's not a sprint. It's a marathon."

Second-ranked West doesn't mind either role as long as it wins, but the tortoise has a faster trot than normal. The Trojans won seven of eight first-round matches, including six by fall.

"It was a pretty good round," Reiland said. "For the most part, we did what we needed to do."

Top-ranked 171-pounder Grant Gambrall got one of those falls, pinning Glenwood's Joey Bryan in 1 minute, 7 seconds. Gambrall, looking for his second state crown at 171, said last year doesn't matter and everyone is gunning for state gold.

"I have the target on my back," Gambrall said. "It generates more pressure, but it's more exciting that way."

Teammate Tyler Carew had an exciting match with Davenport Central's No. 9 Tommy Mirocha. Carew, a state champ at 103 as a freshman, needed a reversal and two nearfall points in the final minute to win, 6-3.

"He gutted it out. That's what you need to do," Reiland said of Carew, who lost in the first round here last year. "He won. We'll move on."

Defending state champions Nate Moore (125), Nick Moore (140) and Derek St. John (145) added falls. Jeremy Garvin got a fall at 152, and unranked Matt Behnami added a fall at 189.

Gambrall and Nate Moore set up important No. 1 vs. No. 2 matches with Waverly-Shell Rock in the quarterfinals.

"Waverly has 13 guys and we have (seven). We have to catch them somehow," Gambrall said.

Cedar Rapids Prairie is fourth with 22 points and has five in the quarterfinals.

Craig Johnson (32-4), a senior wrestling varsity for the first time this season, scored a fall in his state debut. Johnson led 2-0 before decking Sioux City East's Rulin Pedersen in 5:39 at 119 pounds.

"I'm just taking everything in," Johnson said. "I'm taking one match at a time. My main goal is to be on the podium."

Jake Rizzio followed Johnson's pin with a comeback against No. 9 Evan Quail of Spencer, hitting a five-point move in the final period for a 9-3 win at 125. Tyler Hardin (140) and top-ranked Mickey Sprague (215) had falls, and Cal Beatty won a decision at 145 for Prairie.

Cedar Rapids Jefferson and Linn-Mar each advanced two. Jason McCormick (160) and Cody Northern (215) won by pin and major decision for Jefferson. Linn-Mar's Matt McDonough pinned Prairie's Cole Schulte at 130, and teammate Luke Goodson (215) also won.

Marion's Curtis Ette got a pin at 160.

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