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Article published: Feb 23, 2008

Season of sweeps

CEDAR RAPIDS — Waverly-Shell Rock Coach Rick Caldwell isn't sure if his team is the best team in the history of Iowa wrestling, but he says it deserves to be considered.

The top-ranked Go-Hawks made a strong case after beating Iowa City West for the Class 3A state dual tournament last night at the U.S. Cellular Center. A week after setting a state tournament scoring record in Des Moines, Waverly-Shell Rock won seven matches, notching a 42-28 win over the Trojans.

Ballard in Class 2A and Don Bosco in Class 1A also repeated titles earned last week in Des Moines.

Before the Go-Hawks (25-2) even won a match they were building momentum. West was heavily favored in the first four weights but scored only one bonus point.

"Guys stepped up like that," Dylan Wrage said. "Didn't give up bonus points. That's what won us the dual."

Of course, Wrage provided his own spark, hitting David Solis with a headlock near the edge of the mat and earning a fall in 1 minute, 22 seconds. The Go-Hawks followed with falls in each of the next five contested matches, building a 36-13 lead after 119.

"That's something we do as a team, We get on a roll really quick," said Wrage, who won the 189-pound state title last week. "We feed off each other. That's what helped us out."

Freshman Cody Kruiwiede (215), Jordan Rinken (103), Cody Caldwell (112) and 119-pound state champion Jake Ballweg each added falls. Older brother, Mark Ballweg, capped the meet with a fall at 140.

"We thought we were one of the top teams in the nation, and we just wanted to wrestle like it," Mark Ballweg said. "You know, prove that we were. It was a good dominating win."

Many of the Go-Hawks huddled afterward, visibly showing emotion and sharing tears. The state title sweep was the culmination of the entire group's goal. It brought Waverly-Shell Rock's massive top-ranked heavyweight Eric Thompson to tears.

"It's 11 seniors since third grade working for two state titles their senior year," said Thompson, who received a forfeit. "There is no better way (to end it) than with my teammates."

This set of championship performances was different to Mark Ballweg, who would have been disappointed with anything less.

"It feels great, but it's not as exhilarating as it was that first go-round," he said. "I expected it of this team, because I knew we had the potential."

Coach Caldwell said this group of seniors has a special place in his heart and he described them as great kids. He added said they helped "set the tone for the program." In eight state tournaments, they earned eight state trophies and four titles. Before they entered high school, Waverly-Shell Rock had none.

"It's really been fun to watch those trophies add up in that trophy case," Mark Ballweg said.

The Go-Hawks soared to the final, losing just five matches in blowout wins over Sioux City North (58-12) and fourth-seeded Indianola (50-6).

West won seven matches in the final, but only three with bonus points. Grant Gambrall earned bonus points at 171 with a 15-2 major decision over Lee Averhoff, building a 13-0 lead after four matches. State champions Nick Moore (145) and Derek St. John (152), and Jeremy Garvin at 160 each won by decision.

The Trojans, who had won four of the last six titles, won three of the last four matches, receiving falls from two-time state champion Nate Moore and Dylan Carew at 125 and 130. Tyler Carew blanked Anthony Campbell, 4-0, at 135.

"They did a good job of stopping our bonus points and we didn't do a very good job of stopping theirs," West Coach Mark Reiland said. "We won seven matches. That's what we needed to do," Reiland said. "We just didn't get the falls and we didn't stop the falls."

Second-ranked West (20-3) advanced to the finals with a 48-17 quarterfinal win over Keokuk and a solid 43-26 victory over Council Bluffs Lewis Central in the semifinals.

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