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West begins its road to redemption


ANDY HAMILTON • IOWA CITY PRESS-CITIZEN • FEBRUARY 25, 2009

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This is a week of recovery for most of the state's top high school wrestlers.

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For West High, it's a week of redemption.

"We've got some stuff to prove yet," three-time state champion Nick Moore said Tuesday night after the Trojans proved yet again that they're a handful in a dual setting.

The top-ranked dual team in Class 3A hammered North Scott 57-17 to earn a ticket into Saturday's state dual tournament at the U.S. Cellular Center in Cedar Rapids.

West (26-2) won 10 of the final 11 matches, collecting eight pins, a forfeit and a win from two-time state champion Derek St. John, who moved up a weight and handled second-ranked Walt Gilmor at 171.

Not a bad showing for a team with a lengthy medical report incurred during last week's state traditional tournament when the Trojans finished second to Waverly-Shell Rock in Des Moines.

"Toward the end of the year, that's pretty much how everybody feels," St. John said. "But you've got to push through it and end things the right way."

The Trojans will begin pursuit of their third state dual title in four years at 10 a.m. Saturday.

"Right now, I'm just glad we got through tonight," West coach Mark Reiland said. "We had four guys who were out sick yesterday. The whole team, there aren't a whole lot of healthy guys right now. The state tournament, when you're all together, if one guy is sick, you all get sick. I've been sick for three weeks, so obviously I'm not helping matters."

The Trojans looked plenty healthy Tuesday night.

"We're trying to get last week out of the picture," Moore said. "We're trying to refocus and take our second chance at a state title. It's another chance to get a state title, and we're hopefully going to use it and not take it for granted."

Moore and Dylan Carew moved up from the weights where they won state championships Saturday night and notched first-period falls. So, too, did 189-pounder Dexter Curry and Brandon Kuehl, two of the West wrestlers who weren't among the Trojans' 10 traditional tournament qualifiers.

West also got falls from Gradey Gambrell, Tracy Bowers, Justin Koethe and Matt Behnami.

"You can end on a good note instead of getting beat out when you expect to place and expect to be on the (medal) podium," said Gambrell, who fell one victory short of placing last weekend. "It's a lot better to end on a good note."

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The Trojans wrestled Tuesday without 171-pound state place-winner David Solis, who, according to Reiland, "could barely breathe after his matches" in Des Moines.

Review
LaserSpineInstitute.com

The Trojans bumped St. John up from 160 to 171 to take on Gilmor, who was undefeated entering the state meet before failing to place. St. John scored three takedowns in the third period to blow open a 12-6 decision.

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"Not really what I had in mind," St. John said. "I wanted to go out there and dominate. It didn't really turn out the way I wanted to, but it's all right. A win's a win, I guess."

It was St. John's third straight victory since the nation's top-ranked 160-pounder suffered a stunning semifinal loss to Des Moines Roosevelt's John Nicholson in Friday's semifinals.

"It's just frustrating to go through the year like that and dominate everybody you wrestle and then turn around and have that happen to you in a tournament like that," St. John said.

"(But) you've got to be ready to go every match, and when you're not, it's going to come back and bite you in the butt. I'm moving forward now. I've got to forget about it, well, not really forget about it, but keep it in the back of my mind and move on."

Reiland said Tuesday night's victory was a match that "probably helps get Derek back on track a little bit."

"He's kind of got his dobber down a little bit," Reiland said. "It was good to see him come out of his shell a little bit today. He wasn't just moping around. He's going to step up and perform anyway, but we need him to step up and be the leader that he's been all year. That's going to be more important than anything."

WEST HIGH 57, NORTH SCOTT 17

119 -- Adam Perrin (NS) pinned Hunter St. John 3:11.

125 -- Garrett Seligmann (NS) tech. fall Colin Lord 15-0 in 2:40.

130 -- Gradey Gambrell (W) pinned Drake Epkes 3:55.

135 -- Tracy Bowers (W) pinned Austin Fleetwood 2:48.

140 -- Justin Koethe (W) pinned Connor Paulsen 2:41.

145 -- Tanner Anderson (NS) dec. A.J. Bailey 9-2.

152 -- Dylan Carew (W) pinned Greg Kramer 1:30.

160 -- Nick Moore (W) pinned Josh Vance :46.

171 -- Derek St. John (W) dec. Walt Gilmor 12-6.

189 -- Dexter Curry (W) pinned Stephen Liske 1:28.

215 -- Matt Behnami (W) pinned Ben Nagle 5:22.

Hwt. -- Brandon Kuehl (W) pinned Jake Arthur 1:08.

103 -- Jack Hathaway (W) won by forfeit.

112 -- Connor Ryan (NS) dec. Jon Skarda 7-0.

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