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Guthrie Center travels long road

CEDAR RAPIDS — The trip to the state dual meet tournament is a little more than 190 miles, but the actual journey for the Guthrie Center Tigers has been much further.

Guthrie Center (23-6) was one of four teams that made its debut at the state dual tournament Saturday in the U.S. Cellular Center. The Tigers lost to Truro I-35 in the Class 1A quarterfinals, 35-28, but even that loss demonstrates the strides the team has made.

The dual wasn't decided until the final match in a drastic turnaround from a dual in December when the Tigers won only one match in a 52-9 loss to the Roadrunners.

"We've come a long way," Guthrie Center Coach Shawn Danker said. "We built from Day 1 to now."

A group of seniors helped the rebuilding process, nurturing the underclassmen who hold nine of 14 varsity spots. Saturday was an example of how the team developed its ability.

"They took those underclassmen and took them under their wing," Danker said.

Those seniors recognized the Tigers' potential, despite a 1-2 start that inched to 4-3 before winning 19 of their last 22 duals.

"We knew we had the talent to get down here," senior Reid Imerman said. "It was a matter of putting it together."

Danker said the team was loose and enjoyed the atmosphere here. He called it a great experience for his wrestlers. Imerman, who won by major decision in his 152-pound contest, said it was a big deal to participate, even if the team fell short of earning a trophy.

"It's amazing to get down here," Imerman said. "I just wish we could have turned that dual around."

The other first-time qualifiers no doubt do as well. North-Linn (17-1), Des Moines Roosevelt (20-5) and Keokuk (15-4) dropped their first state dual contests. The Lynx lost to Don Bosco, 62-5, Indianola beat Roosevelt, 44-20, and Keokuk lost to second-seeded Iowa City West, 48-17.

"It's a great accomplishment for Keokuk to reach the state duals," Chiefs Coach Tommy Rose said. "The experience was great. Hopefully, we can get back next year and do better."

The traditional tournament in Des Moines is said to be the pinnacle of the season, but the state duals has an attraction. The extra week of practice and work is worth being part of school history.

"It feels good to be on the first team to go," Keokuk 103-pounder Ethan Cooper said. "We've been working hard the whole season. It was part of our goals."

Revenge for the Carews

Iowa City West's Dylan and Tyler Carew avenged district losses in the 3A quarterfinals against Keokuk. Dylan

topped state runner-up Julian Feikert, 5-1.

"I was praying we had Keokuk," Dylan said. "I cared a lot that I lost that match. I got it back."

He said there some factors that left him emotionally drained in that first match. One was his brother's lost to the Chiefs' Brandon Briggs, keeping Tyler from the state meet.

Tyler reversed that loss as well, beating Briggs, 1-0.

"That's what me and my brother talked about," Dylan said. "Let's go get a little bit of redemption together."

A grand class

When Anthony Campbell won his first-round match against Sioux City North's Matt Fagan, it gave the 130-pound senior his 100th career victory. He's the ninth Go-Hawk senior to reach the 100-win plateau. The seniors have amassed more than 1,000 wins.

"It's great," Waverly Coach Rick Caldwell said. "That's pretty impressive for a class."

The group consists of Matt Kittleson (125), Mark Ballweg (135), Justin Denner (145), Khyle Cox (152), Reed Kahler (160), Lee Averhoff (171), Dylan Wrage (189) and Eric Thompson (285). Caldwell would put his seniors up against anybody.

"To have the quantity and quality we have, I think we have the best class in the country."

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