

Baker, Lembeck, Turner take 3rd at state

Written by Jim Ecker

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DES MOINES - One guy was elated, another guy philosophical in defeat and the third guy sorely disappointed.

That's what happens when you finish third at the state wrestling tournament. The level of happiness - or sadness - depends on your point of view.

Cole Turner (285) of Xavier, Ross Lembeck (152) of Linn-Mar and Brenden Baker (106) of Jefferson all placed third at the Class 3A state meet at Wells Fargo Arena in Des Moines Saturday afternoon.

Turner, a late convert to the sport, was absolutely delighted after getting a takedown in the final seconds of triple overtime to trim Jordan Bywater of Council Bluffs Lincoln, 4-3, to grab the bronze and finish his prep career in style.

"I'm sure going to miss it," he said.

Turner has a scholarship to play football at the University of Wyoming, but he might be tempted to join the college wrestling team if given a chance.

"If it were presented to me, I would consider it," he said. "But I don't really want it to affect my playing time in football. If they were to approach me with it, I would definitely consider it very carefully, but we'll see."

Linn-Mar senior Ross Lembeck, ranked No.1 at 152 pounds, suffered his only loss of an injury-plagued season in the semifinals Friday night, but pulled things together and won twice Saturday to grab third place.

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Lembeck missed a month of the season following knee surgery, then hurt his right shoulder Friday night. He tweaked the shoulder again Saturday in the third-place match against Ethan Ruby of Lewis Central, but shrugged it off and claimed the bronze medal with a 9-3 verdict.

Lembeck wanted to end his career as a state champion, but the four-time place winner fell a little short.

"It's a bit of a disappointment, but not coming back 100 percent for the tournament after surgery and everything, it's something to be a little bit happy about," he said, somewhat philosophically, "but I'm never satisfied.

"State champ is always the goal," he said. "I didn't achieve that, but I've got a few things to be proud of, a lot of good matches and fun times with my teammates."

Lembeck placed 7th, 2nd, 5th and 3rd in his career. He has a scholarship offer to wrestle at Northern Illinois and is leaning toward DeKalb, but plans to visit a few more schools before deciding.

"Right now that would be my first choice," said Lembeck, who wore a Northern Illinois sweatshirt at Wells Fargo Arena Friday night.

Linn-Mar senior Alijah Jeffery, the top-ranked wrestler at 120 pounds and a state finalist, has committed to Northern Illinois. Jeffery and Lembeck are good friends.

Baker, a sophomore, compiled a flashy 41-1 record at 106 pounds this season and was ranked No.1 for much of the year, but he lost in the quarterfinals Thursday and had to battle all the way back to place third.

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"It's probably the worst thing in my life right now, because everything I worked for went down the drain," he remarked.

Baker took little consolation in his 41-1 record and strong campaign.

"It's not too bad," he allowed, "but there shouldn't be a loss on there, to be completely honest. It's not what I anticipated, but I just have to come back harder during the off-season, because it's not going to leave me. It will be in the back of my head the whole time, every day I work out."

Baker lost to Triston Lara of Fort Dodge, 8-6, on a late takedown in the quarterfinals, but he faced Lara again Saturday in the consolation match for third place and whipped him 14-6.

"The first match he beat me, I didn't come out and wrestle," said Baker. "I didn't properly prepare; I think I overlooked him a little bit. Now we're even. I was not going to let it happen again."

"I'll settle for third this year, but it's not happening again."

Baker had to get mentally prepared to wrestle at a high level after losing his only match of the season Thursday.

"I just knew I had to get it done," he said. "At first I was like, 'Oh, I don't even want to wrestle anymore, because I'm not going for a state championship,' but then I took a couple of hours and realized, 'All right, it's not this year (a state title), but I have a couple of more years to get it done.'"

Twelve Metro wrestlers finished as placement winners in the consolation rounds Saturday.

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Clint Lembeck (132) of Xavier and Josh Wenger (138) of Prairie finished fourth. Nolan Hrmidko (113) of Kennedy, Damon Griffin (126) of Linn-Mar, Matt Wempen (132) of Linn-Mar and Nick Drahozal (145) of Xavier placed fifth.

Sam Uthoff (120) of Prairie was sixth. Noah Ajram (113) of Linn-Mar and Kyle Briggs (120) of Jefferson placed seventh.

[Saturday's Class 3A Results](#)