

Prairie wins 1st MVC mat title since '95

Written by Jim Ecker

Saturday, 26 January 2013 21:53 - Last Updated Saturday, 26 January 2013 22:17



The oldest members of the Cedar Rapids Prairie wrestling team were born in 1994 and 1995, which is an odd coincidence.

Those are the only two years the Hawks had ever won the Mississippi Valley Conference wrestling tournament. Until now, that is.

Prairie ended its 18-year dry spell in the MVC tournament by claiming top honors Saturday at the Cedar Rapids Washington gym.

Iowa City West had captured nine straight titles, a streak that began in 2004 - the same year Blake Williams became the head coach at Prairie.

Williams led the Hawks to a string of second-place showings over the years, always looking up at Iowa City West, but that changed Saturday.

"I'm just happy for these kids and the senior group," he said. "They work hard."

Prairie finished with 262.5 points for a comfortable 45-point margin over the Linn-Mar Lions. Iowa City West placed third.

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Seniors Jamie Day (152 pounds), Cam Rathje (170) and Andrew Netolicky (285) captured individual titles for Prairie. Day and Rathje were born in 1994, so they were toddlers the last time the Hawks won an MVC crown. Netolicky was born on April 1, 1995 - about two months after the Hawks won their league crown that year.

"It's nice," Netolicky said about the team championship. "We feel like this is our toughest year in a long time. We feel really good about our team."



Netolicky pinned Zac Gillis of Washington in overtime for the 285-pound title. Day trimmed Brandon Haas of Dubuque Hempstead, 6-4, for top honors at 152. Rathje pinned Weslee Haynes of Dubuque Wahlert for the title at 170.

Netolicky and Rathje won their second straight MVC titles. "We all wrestled well, we fought hard and did what we were supposed to do," said Rathje.

Matt Wempen (113), Alijah Jeffery (120) and Joel Northrup (145) won titles for Linn-Mar. It was the second straight crown for Wempen, who is only a sophomore. Northrup, a senior, won his second MVC title. The other came when he was a freshman in 2010 at 103 pounds.

Dax Dills of Washington took top honors at 132 pounds.

Prairie won the championship despite not having Austin Gould, Dylan Becker and Jordan Flege in the lineup.

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"It's tougher (without them), but we have guys that can step in and make a difference," said Netolicky. "They put points on the board for us. They're doing their job."

Flege was not feeling well and stayed home from school Friday. Becker and Gould are currently sidelined with injuries and are hopeful of wrestling again at the district meet in two weeks.



"We hope we get those guys back, but we've got a good team with whoever we put out there," said Williams. "Our kids believe in that, and that's important."

The Prairie Hawks were happy and proud of their accomplishment, but they almost immediately began looking ahead.

"Hopefully we can win districts. That would be awesome," said Netolicky. "State? Hopefully we're in contention. We want to win."

"That's been our goal all year. We say it every day after practice. We feel good about it."

The Hawks have a league banner to display at school. Now they hope it's a stepping-stone for bigger prizes in the weeks ahead.

"Never satisfied," said Rathje. "Just get ready for practice and keep getting better."

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Rathje and Netolicky climbed to the top rung of the awards stand last year, so they knew the way Saturday. It was a new experience for Day.

"If you had watched him as a freshman, compared to where he is now, the progress he's made is amazing," said Williams. "It's a credit to him."

Day was glad he helped the Hawks win the title. "We've been working hard in the room, so I feel like we deserve it," he said.

And just like his teammates, Day preferred to look ahead and performing well at the district and state meets. "It just depends on how we prepare for the tournaments we have coming up," he said. "We'll see where it goes."

Williams echoed the same theme. He's proud of the MVC title, but hopeful of bagging even bigger prizes in February.

"Hopefully this gives our team and the individuals on our team the confidence going into the next couple of weeks," he said. "It feels good, but there's bigger things, hopefully, for the team and the kids."

MISSISSIPPI VALLEY CONFERENCE TOURNAMENT

Team Standings

1. Prairie 262.5, 2. Linn-Mar 217.5, 3. Iowa City West 209.5, 4. Jefferson 166, 5. Cedar Falls 160, 6. Wahlert 118.5, 7. Waterloo West 110, 8. Washington 106, 9. Xavier 102, 10. Kennedy 99, 11. Dubuque Senior 88.5, 12. Hempstead 78.5, 13. Iowa City High 59, 14. Waterloo East 30.

Championship Round

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106 - Chase Lynn (DS) major dec. Nolan Hromidko (CRK), 13-4
113 - Matt Wempen (LM) tech fall Kyle Briggs (CRJ), 17-0
120 - Alijah Jeffery (LM) dec. Daniel Kelly (CF), 8-2
126 - Chris Walters (ICW) dec. Josh Wenger (CRP), 4-1
132 - Dax Dills (CRW) major dec. Matt Hesselman (DS), 10-2
138 - Kegan Wakefield (ICW) dec. Trey Blaha (CRP), 2-1
145 - Joel Northrup (LM) dec. Skyler St.John (CRP), 5-2
152 - Jamie Day (CRP) dec. Brandon Haas (DH), 6-4
160 - Clark Doyle (CF) pinned Dakota Digmann (LM), 3:06
170 - Cam Rathje (CRP) pinned Weslee Haynes (DW), 3:04
182 - Nick Hagedorn (CF) dec. Andrew Holladay (LM), 14-12
195 - Marcus Harrington (WW) dec. Mickey Pelfrey (ICW), 5-1
220 - Micah Kelsay (ICW) dec. Gannon Gremmel (DH), 9-5
285 - Andrew Netolicky (CRP) pinned Zac Gillis (CRW), 8:10 (ot)

PRAIRIE PLACEWINNERS

1st - Jamie Day (152)
1st - Cam Rathje (170)
1st - Andrew Netolicky (285)
2nd - Josh Wenge (126)
2nd - Trey Blaha (138)
2nd - Skyler St.John (145)
3rd - Sam Uthoff (106)
3rd - River Whitters (160)
3rd - Casey Becker (195)
5th - Zack Fiser (113)
5th - Jarod Cadena (182)
5th - Jesse Hynek (220)

LINN-MAR PLACEWINNERS

1st - Matt Wempen (113)
1st - Alijah Jeffery (120)
1st - Joel Northrup (145)
2nd - Dakota Digmann (160)
2nd - Andrew Holladay (182)
3rd - Damon Griffin (126)
3rd - Shea Hartzler (138)
4th - Noah Ajram (106)
4th - Emmanuel Jeffery (132)
4th - Justin Green (220)

JEFFERSON PLACEWINNERS

2nd - Kyle Briggs (113)

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4th - Patrick Rashed (120)
4th - Cody Hensel (126)
4th - Kelly May (152)
4th - Luke Sedlacek (160)
4th - Drake Allen (182)
5th - Brenden Baker (106)
5th - Michael Moncivais (132)
5th - Josh Allen (170)
5th - Randy Deaton (285)
6th - Dalton Kuehl (195)

WASHINGTON PLACEWINNERS

1st - Dax Dills (132)
2nd - Zac Gillis (285)
3rd - JP Mercado (145)
5th - Trey Schuler (120)
6th - Tyler Burkle (160)

XAVIER PLACEWINNERS

3rd - Clint Lembeck (120)
3rd - Sean Ickes (170)
6th - Jerry Duball (132)
6th - Nick Drahozal (138)
6th - Cole Turner (285)

KENNEDY PLACEWINNERS

2nd - Nolan Hromidko (106)
3rd - James Ruzicka (132)
5th - Nathan Waterhouse (126)
6th - Taylor Moss (120)