

Toothless Lions whipped by Waverly-SR

Written by Jim Ecker

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The Linn-Mar Lions tried to wrestle Waverly-Shell Rock with a depleted lineup Saturday at the Dual Team Championships.

The result was predictable.

The toothless Lions got trounced by the Waverly wrestling machine, 58-10, in the Class 3A quarterfinals at the U.S. Cellular Center.

Waverly-Shell Rock finished third after losing to Bettendorf in the semifinals and beating Southeast Polk. Iowa City West beat Bettendorf, 33-19, for the championship.

Linn-Mar had only four wrestlers at their accustomed spots in the 14-man lineup due to injury, illness and an inability to make weight at the end of a grueling campaign.

It was a recipe for a wipeout against Waverly-Shell Rock, which won the traditional state wrestling tournament in Des Moines last week and has one of the top programs in the state.

"That was the best (lineup) we had," said Linn-Coach Doug Streicher.

Linn-Mar nudged North Scott, 30-29, in the regional tournament Tuesday to qualify for the state duals, but Streicher knew it would be tough to hold the lineup together.

"A couple of guys were really, really hurting on Tuesday," he said. "We knew they probably weren't getting down (to make weight) twice this week. Then we had some sickness going through the lineup with the other guys and a couple of injuries, I guess."

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A.J. Garcia wrestled in his normal spot at 215 pounds and collected a major decision. Alijah Jeffery jumped from 103 pounds to 112 and won a 2-1 verdict, and Ross Lembeck climbed two weights from 135 to 145 and won 3-2 in overtime.

Waverly-Shell Rock won the 11 other matches and moved into the semifinals against Bettendorf. Iowa City West and Southeast Polk met in the other semifinal of the eight-team tournament.

Streicher thinks the Lions could have given Waverly-Shell Rock a good meet at full strength.

"But that's not the way it ended up for us, so we just went out there and did the best we could today with the kids we had in the lineup," he said. "But obviously, potential doesn't win matches."

Dan Radig, Josh Pederson, Dakota Digmann, Mitch Wantock and Mark Atwater did not wrestle for the Lions Saturday. Jeffery, Joel Northrup, Trevor Berry and Tanner Regenwether all wrestled at higher weights, giving Linn-Mar a makeshift lineup.

It was a tough finish to a bumpy year, filled with injuries, a district title and a disappointing end.

"We won a lot of dual meets, we won a lot of tournaments," said Streicher. "We didn't do as well at the state tournament (15th) as I would have liked. So obviously we have to do a little bit better job of preparing for that next year. We didn't seem to be ready like we typically are for state."

The Lions were at full-strength only once all season, when they won the Class 3A district title at Epworth.

Streicher thinks the future could be bright. His top lineup included only three seniors, which means 11 of 14 starters are scheduled to return next season.

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"We're young, and we know our best years are probably ahead of us as far as talent on the mat," he said. "This year has been an injury year like no other I've seen before in my 14 years.

"It was a pretty good year for us," he said. "My message to the guys as we leave here is, next year we have to be better. Whether it's the state tournament or state duals, getting here is not enough.

"Next year, if we lose in the first round of the state duals, something didn't go right."

WAVERLY-SHELL ROCK 58, LINN-MAR 10

103 -- Andrew Stiert (WSR) pinned Ted Petersen, 1:17; 112 -- Alijah Jeffery (LM) dec. Spencer Derifield, 2-1; 119 -- Eric De Vos (WSR) tech fall Joel Northrup, 16-0; 125 -- Tanner Werner (WSR) pinned Trevor Berry, 2:21; 130 -- Seth Ebling (WSR) tech fall Jeremy Severin, 17-1; 135 -- Kolton Rottink (WSR) pinned Luke Wempen, 5:32; 140 -- Jordan Rinken (WSR) pinned Spencer Clabough, 1:47; 145 -- Ross Lembeck (LM) dec. Blake Seehusen, 3-2 (OT); 152 -- Cody Caldwell (WSR) tech fall Tanner Regenwether, 17-1; 160 -- Shawn Miller (WSR) major dec. Andrew Holladay, 15-7; 171 -- Terry Stover (WSR) pinned Michael Gansen, 1:55; 189 -- Collin Heidemann (WSR) dec. Ryley Stancel, 6-2; 215 -- A.J. Garcia (LM) major dec. Kaleb Staack, 12-1; 285 -- Cody Krumwiede (WSR) pinned Dustin Smith, 1:55.