

Griffin works extra hard for MVC title

Written by Jim Ecker

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IOWA CITY - Damon Griffin spends all day in school, practices for several hours with the Linn-Mar wrestling team and works out some more with an ex-Marine at home.

All that hard work paid off Saturday.

Griffin had an impressive day at the Mississippi Valley Conference wrestling tournament and grabbed the 120-pound title with four straight victories, capped by a 9-0 major decision over Ernest Willis of Iowa City West in the finals.

Griffin's special workout partner at home is his father, Chad Griffin, who wrestled in high school and spent 12 years in the Marines.

"I wrestle with him after practice," said Griffin, who proudly wore a Marines T-shirt over his singlet on Saturday. "I work hard in practice, but I work harder at home because I wanted this win."

Griffin lost to Willis in overtime earlier this season and vowed it wasn't going to happen again. He credits his father for instilling military toughness in his 120-pound body.

"Even when he's working hard, he'll help me," said Griffin. "I'm thankful for him. He is always there for me."

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Griffin was barely touched on his way to the title with a pin in 1:23, a 4-0 verdict, a pin in 1:58 and his 9-0 triumph in the finals at the Iowa City West gym.

"He's a go-er. He never gets tired," said Linn-Mar Coach Doug Streicher. "He'll mix it up out there. It's fun to watch."

Griffin is aiming for a state title this season as a sophomore. "I want that bad," he said.

Streicher thinks anything is possible for the dynamic grappler. "He can be right there with the best of them," the coach said.

Streicher said he didn't know Griffin wrestles with his father at home after finishing practice at school. "But it doesn't surprise me," he said.

Griffin and the Lions made a run at the MVC team championship and trailed Iowa City West by just one point, 214.5-213.5, entering the final round, but the third-ranked Trojans won six individual crowns and claimed their ninth straight conference title since 2004.

Linn-Mar captured three titles and placed second in the team standings. Prairie also won three crowns and finished third.

Iowa City West went 6-1 in the championship round and finished with 250.5 markers. Linn-Mar went 3-3 in the finals and scored 237.5 points, while Prairie also went 3-3 and finished with 220.

Matt Wempen took the 106-pound title for Linn-Mar with two pins and a 2-1 victory in the finals. Mark Atwater won his second straight MVC crown for the Lions by nipping Austin Gould of Prairie, 3-2, for top honors at 182 pounds.

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Prairie senior Zach Witte captured his third straight conference title by injury default at 152 pounds when Clark Doyle of Cedar Falls injured his right arm in the second period and could not continue.

Cameron Rathje claimed the 170-pound title for Prairie with a 6-3 verdict over Mitch Wantock of Linn-Mar. Andrew Netolicky won the 220-pound crown for Prairie when he trimmed Steve Ferentz of Iowa City High in the finals, 4-3.

Netolicky, a junior, joined the 100 Win Club for his career with a 20-second pin in the quarterfinals and finished the day with 102 victories in his pocket.

Tyler Burrell of Cedar Rapids Washington claimed the 285-pound crown with a 3-2 decision over Darrell Caldwell of Waterloo East.

Three Linn-Mar wrestlers finished second with Joel Northrup (132), Ross Lembeck (145) and Wantock (170) all stopping one step short of their goals.

Prairie received second-place showings from Josh Wenger (113), Skyler St. John (138) and Gould (182). Wenger upset Iowa City West state champion Phillip Laux in a dual meet Thursday, but Laux won their rematch in the finals 9-5.

Shane Williams of Kennedy finished second at 160 pounds.

Cedar Rapids Jefferson place fifth in the team standings with 121 points, even though the J-Hawks did not have anyone finish first, second or third.

Kennedy tied for sixth in the team standings, Washington finished eighth and Xavier was 12th.

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TEAM STANDINGS

1. Iowa City West 250.5, 2. Linn-Mar 237.5, 3. Prairie 220, 4. Cedar Falls 145.5, 5. Jefferson 121, 6. (tie) Kennedy 84, Iowa City High 84, 8. Washington 81, 9. Wahlert 78, 10. Dubuque Senior 77.5, 11. Waterloo West 43.5, 12. Xavier 43, 13. (tie) Hempstead 26, Waterloo East 26.

SEMIFINALS

106

Wempen (LM) pinned Bollman (CRJ), 2:35.

Kelly (CF) dec. Lynn (DS) 3-1.

113

Wenger (CRP) major dec. Rashed (CRJ), 12-2.

Laux (ICW) dec. Jeffery (LM), 3-1.

120

Willis (ICW) major dec. Thomas (CF), 13-4.

Griffin (LM) pinned Schuler (CRW), 1:58.

126

Hathaway (ICW) pinned Berry (LM), 0:41.

Vance (DW) dec. Blaha (CRP), 7-5.

132

Bauer (ICW) pinned Brummel (CF), 1:10.

Northrup (LM) pinned Kremer (CRK), 4:25.

138

Broderick (DW) dec. Chalkley (ICW), 6-3.

St. John (CRP) dec. Rodriguez (CRK), 5-0.

145

Lembeck (LM) pinned Haynes (DW), 3:46.

Gambrall (ICW) dec. Wagner (CRP), 2-1.

152

Witte (CRP) dec. Pederson (LM), 3-1.

Doyle (CF) dec. White (DW), 4-3.

160

Koethe (ICW) pinned Conner (LM), 1:14.

Williams (CRK) major dec. Butler (CRJ), 15-7.

170

Rathje (CRP) dec. Dailey (ICH), 3-0.

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Wantock (LM) pinned Langley (CF), 2-0.

182

Gould (CRP) pinned Harrington (WW), 3:25.

Atwater (LM) dec. Fritsch (DH), 3-2 (ot).

195

M. Pelfrey (ICW) pinned Stancel (LM), 3:20.

Maas (ICH) dec. Schulte (CRP), 5-3.

220

Netolicky (CRP) pinned Green (LM), 3:29.

Ferentz (ICH) dec. Davis (CF), 3-0.

285

Burrell (CRW) dec. Terpstra (CF), 3-1.

Caldwell (WE) pinned Odle (ICH), 3:51.

FIRST PLACE

106 - Wempen (LM) dec. Kelly (CF), 2-1.

113 - Laux (ICW) dec. Wenger (CRP), 9-5.

120 - Griffin (LM) major dec. Willis (ICW), 9-0.

126 - Hathaway (ICW) pinned Vance (DW), 0:50.

132 - Bauer (ICW) dec. Northrup (LM), 6-3.

138 - Broderick (DW) dec. St. John (CRP), 6-2.

145 - Gambrall (ICW) dec. Lembeck (LM), 6-4.

152 - Witte (CRP) def. Doyle (CF), injury default.

160 - Koethe (ICW) pinned Williams (CRK), 1:38.

170 - Rathje (CRP) dec. Wantock (LM), 6-3.

182 - Atwater (LM) dec. Gould (CRP), 3-2.

195 - M. Pelfrey (ICW) dec. Maas (ICH), 8-3.

220 - Netolicky (CRP) dec. Ferentz (ICH), 4-3.

285 - Burrell (CRW) dec. Caldwell (WE), 3-2.

THIRD PLACE

106 - Lynn (DS) dec. Bollman (CRJ), 5-3.

113 - Jeffery (LM) major dec. Rashed (CRJ), 11-1.

120 - Schuler (CRW) dec. Thomas (CF), 7-2.

126 - Blaha (CRP) tech fall Berry (LM), 16-0.

132 - Kremer (CRK) major dec. Brummel (CF), 21-8.

138 - Chalkley (ICW) dec. Rodriguez (CRK), 8-2.

145 - Wagner (CRP) pinned Haynes (DW), 1:05.

152 - White (DW) dec. Pederson (LM), 6-2.

160 - Conner (LM) dec. Butler (CRJ), 8-6 (ot).

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170 - Dailey (ICH) dec. Langley (CF), 7-5.
182 - Fritsch (DH) dec. Harrington (WW), 11-4.
195 - Stancel (LM) dec. Schulte (CRP), 3-1.
220 - Green (LM) dec. Davis (CF), 4-1 (ot).
285 - Terpstra (CF) dec. Odle (ICH), 5-2.

FIFTH PLACE

106 - Lemus (ICH) major dec. D. Dills (CRW), 15-4.
113 - Herkelman (CF) dec. Waterhouse (CRK), 13-6.
120 - Hensel (CRJ) dec. Moss (CRK), 5-3.
126 - Moncivais (CRJ) dec. Eicher (CRW), 4-2 (ot).
132 - Laska (CRX) dec. Becicka (CRP), 8-3.
138 - Sedlacek (CRJ) dec. Dagit (CF), 10-5.
145 - May (CRJ) dec. Burkle (CRW), 3-2.
152 - Kauzlarich (ICW) major dec. Steimel (WW), 11-3.
160 - Becker (CRP) pinned Owens (DH), 2:30.
170 - Watkins (ICW) dec. Mathews (WW), 4-3.
182 - Boland (CRX) dec. Bohner (ICW), 9-6.
195 - Rahnavardi (CF) dec. Leary (CRJ), 7-3.
220 - Blus (DS) pinned Allen (CRJ), 1:06.
285 - Garcia (LM) dec. Foerstner (ICW), 3-1.