

## Wempen champ; Lembeck, Atwater 2nd

Written by Jim Ecker

Saturday, 18 February 2012 23:16 - Last Updated Sunday, 19 February 2012 00:57

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DES MOINES - Linn-Mar freshman Matt Wempen was so happy Saturday night that he cried. And cried and cried and cried.

Wempen trimmed top-ranked Travis Willers of Pleasant Valley in overtime, 3-1, to claim top honors at 106 pounds in the Class 3A state wrestling tournament.

Wempen was bawling like a baby right after the match as he hugged Linn-Mar Coach Doug Streicher and all the assistant coaches. He was still crying several minutes later in a hallway at Wells Fargo Arena.

All the emotions came flooding out.

"I worked so hard for this," he said after wiping away the tears. "I've been wrestling since I was four years old. It feels great.

"I knew it was possible the whole time. As long as I wrestle good I can do anything. I've been working on it my whole life."

Wempen escaped to start the third period and take a 1-0 lead, but he was called for stalling

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with 18 seconds left in the match to tie the score at 1-1. "Yeah, I was a little bit," he admitted.

Both wrestlers began overtime on their feet. Wempen had a takedown slip away, then finished the match with a quick move with 24 seconds left in the one-minute period.

"I faked a little bit, got him to react, snapped him down and got around him," he explained.

Wempen got a little blood on Streicher's dress shirt when he leaped into the coach's arms, but Streicher was too happy for his freshman to care about a red stain.

"That's awesome," said Streicher. "It's awesome for a kid who's worked his butt off for years and years. He's given up family vacations to go wrestle.

"A lot of years, a lot of sweat and tears go into even having a chance to win a state title."



Linn-Mar had three grapplers in the finals, but Ross Lembeck and Mark Atwater fell short in their quests for state titles against undefeated, top-ranked opponents.

Lembeck lost the 145-pound finals to Gabriel Moreno of Urbandale, 8-1. Atwater was blanked by Jared Bartel of Mason City, 5-0, in the championship round at 182 pounds.

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Atwater didn't come close to scoring against Bartel, who dominated the match. Atwater spent a few minutes by himself after the bout, leaning against a wall with his head in his hands after finishing his prep career with a disappointing setback.

"He's just so heavy," Atwater said after collecting his thoughts. "His arms, his legs. He's strong, he moved me around. He made me play to his match. I couldn't get anything going."

Linn-Mar needed a victory by Atwater to climb past Iowa City West and finish third in the team standings. The Trojans nipped the Lions for third, 126.5 points to 126, leaving the Lions in fourth place after a strong showing in Des Moines.

Linn-Mar took nine wrestlers to the state tournament and eight of them went home with medals with top-eight performances, the most in school history.

Linn-Mar's eight place-winners were Wempen (1st, 106), Alijah Jeffery (3rd, 113), Damon Griffin (8th, 120), Joel Northrup (4th, 132), Lembeck (2nd, 145), Mitch Wantock (5th, 170), Atwater (2nd, 182) and A.J. Garcia (4th, 220).

"I thought we wrestled a good tournament overall," said Streicher. "If you had told me two weeks ago before districts we were going to put eight guys into Saturday (the medal round) and have three guys in the finals and have one champ, I probably would have taken that."

Bettendorf won the Class 3A title with 170 points, followed by Southeast Polk at 156.5. Gilbertville Don Bosco took the 1A crown and Denver-Tripoli captured the 2A title.

Cory Clark of Southeast Polk and John Meeks of Des Moines Roosevelt became the 20th and 21st four-time champions in state history. Clark won the Class 3A 126-pound title and Meeks claimed the Class 3A 138-pound trophy. Meeks became the sixth wrestler in state history to finish with an undefeated record for his career.

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Megan Black of Eddyville-Blakesburg became the first girl in state history to place at the state tournament. She finished eighth at 106 pounds in Class 1A.

### STATE TOURNAMENT

At Des Moines

(Wells Fargo Arena)

### Saturday's Results

### CLASS 3A

### Team Standings

(Final)

1. Bettendorf 170.0
2. Southeast Polk 156.5
3. Iowa City, West 126.5
4. Linn Mar, Marion 126.0
5. Prairie, Cedar Rapids 86.5
6. Valley, West Des Moines 84.0
7. Mason City 70.0
7. Pleasant Valley 70.0
7. Waverly-Shell Rock 70.0
10. Lewis Central 64.0
11. Urbandale 59.5
12. Ankeny 58.5
13. Indianola 44.0
14. Spencer 43.0
15. Burlington 39.0
16. Johnston 33.5
17. Des Moines, Roosevelt 28.0
18. Fort Madison 26.5
19. Cedar Falls 22.0
20. Cedar Rapids, Kennedy 21.0
21. North Scott, Eldridge 19.5
22. Dowling Catholic, West Des Moines 18.0
23. Clinton 17.0
23. Sioux City, East 17.0
25. Fort Dodge 16.0
26. Keokuk 15.0

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- 26. Oskaloosa 15.0
- 28. Epworth, Western Dubuque 13.0
- 29. Dubuque, Hempstead 12.5
- 30. Cedar Rapids, Washington 9.0
- 30. Davenport West 9.0
- 30. Sioux City, North 9.0
- 33. Iowa City, City High 8.0
- 33. Knoxville 8.0
- 35. Des Moines, North-Hoover 7.0
- 36. Council Bluffs, Thomas Jefferson 6.0
- 36. Decorah 6.0
- 36. Muscatine 6.0
- 39. Dubuque, Senior 5.0
- 40. Davenport Central 4.0
- 40. Mount Pleasant 4.0
- 42. Ames 3.0
- 42. Council Bluffs, Abraham Lincoln 3.0
- 44. Marshalltown 2.0
- 44. Xavier, Cedar Rapids 2.0
- 46. Boone 1.0
- 46. Davenport North 1.0
- 46. Des Moines, East 1.0

## Championship Bouts

106 pounds

Matt Wempen (Linn Mar, Marion) 48-2 won in overtime over Travis Willers (Pleasant Valley) 50-3 (OT 3-1)

113

Phillip Laux (Iowa City, West) 50-3 won by decision over Fredy Stroker (Bettendorf) 42-2 (Dec 3-1)

120

Tyler Willers (Pleasant Valley) 51-2 won by decision over Chris Walters (Prairie, Cedar Rapids) 40-4 (Dec 3-1)

126

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Cory Clark (Southeast Polk) 46-1 won by decision over Eric DeVos (Waverly-Shell Rock) 44-4 (Dec 6-2)

132

Dakota Bauer (Iowa City, West) 52-2 won by decision over Luke Kremer (Cedar Rapids, Kennedy) 39-6 (Dec 5-4)

138

John Meeks (Des Moines, Roosevelt) 45-0 won by decision over Connor Ryan (Bettendorf) 39-5 (Dec 9-6)

145

Gabriel Moreno (Urbandale) 41-0 won by decision over Ross Lembeck (Linn Mar, Marion) 48-3 (Dec 8-1)

152

Zach Witte (Prairie, Cedar Rapids) 23-0 won by decision over Dylan Blackford (Southeast Polk) 44-4 (Dec 5-3)

160

Zeb Wahle (Lewis Central) 50-2 won by decision over Justin Koethe (Iowa City, West) 53-2 (Dec 3-2)

170

Alex Meyer (Southeast Polk) 46-1 won by decision over Colbey Vance (Bettendorf) 39-6 (Dec 10-4)

182

Jared Bartel (Mason City) 49-0 won by decision over Mark Atwater (Linn Mar, Marion) 31-4 (Dec 5-0)

195

Ross Larson (Ankeny) 41-0 won by pin over Bud Smith (Southeast Polk) 37-5 (Pin 1:21)

220

Willie Miklus (Southeast Polk) 47-0 won by pin over Zach Renshaw (Lewis Central) 48-3 (Pin 1:49)

285

Nate Shaw (Bettendorf) 31-1 won in overtime over Don Dawson (Indianola) 37-3 (OT 6-4)