

Surprising Cougars steal the show

Written by Jim Ecker

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DES MOINES - The Cedar Rapids Kennedy wrestling team surprised a lot of people at the Class 3A state wrestling tournament in Des Moines this week.

They even surprised themselves.

The Cougars surged into a tie for fourth place in the team standings Saturday following the consolation finals at Wells Fargo Arena with just a five-man team.

The Cougars have fared better than all the other Metro teams in the tournament and they've fared better than all the other Mississippi Valley Conference clubs in the tournament.

Nobody saw it coming.

"We turned a lot of heads today," said Nolan Hromidko, who placed third at 126 pounds. "I was surprised myself, actually, when I looked at the standings today, but that's what hard work and determination gets you."

For most of the season, the Cougars were the third-best team from the Metro (after Prairie and Jefferson) and perhaps the fourth-best team in the MVC.

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They saved their best for last.

"It's been a heck of a week for the kids," said Kennedy Coach Dennis Hynek. "They've really battled hard."

Kennedy had a good team this year, but the Cougars enjoyed a terrific three-day run in Des Moines.

And they're not done yet. Logen Rodriguez will be wrestling in the 152-pound finals Saturday night, giving the Cougars another chance to shine under the bright lights.

Ben Sarasin finished fourth at 160 pounds for Kennedy, Garrett Kubovec placed sixth at 170 pounds and Dalles Jacobus finished seventh at 220 pounds by pinning Alex Freiburger of Dubuque Hempstead.

Frieburger pinned Jacobus twice during the season, but Jacobus had an imposing 13-0 lead Saturday when he stuck Freiburger in the third period to collect extra points for the Cougars.

Jacobus might have been the happiest seventh-place finisher in state history, yelling and wrapping Hynek in a giant bear hug. He lost two earlier matches in the tournament and did not want to taste defeat again.

"I wanted it more than anything," he said. "I don't enjoy losing. Two losses in the same weekend, I'm not OK with that.

"Having a chance to place this year is amazing."

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