

Wrestlers make Outlaws history at district championships

By Rongi Yost
Correspondent

The nine Outlaws wrestlers who competed at the OSAA Special District 4A Wrestling Championships at Madras High School Friday and Saturday, February 8-9, posted Sisters' best showing ever for Outlaws wrestling. They finished sixth out of eight teams with a score of 80.5.

La Grande took first (376.54), Baker was runner-up (317), and Ontario took third with 196 points.

Sisters' squad had the lowest numbers (nine) of any team in attendance, yet came away with strong performances. Two wrestlers, junior Ethan Martin and senior Dalton Ford, both qualified for the state championships, which will be held in Portland. Martin brought home a bronze medal and Ford took fourth.

Ford (126 pounds) won the fourth-place wrestle back to earn his trip to state.

Coach John Downs explained what a wrestle back involves:

"A fourth-place wrestle back means that it will prove who the true fourth-placer is. The person who earned fourth can be challenged if the person who earned fifth has never wrestled the fourth-place wrestler or beat him/her earlier in the tournament."

Ford did exactly that. Dalton won his first match by a fall, and then was pinned by the No. 1-seeded wrestler in his second match. The loss moved him into the consolation finals where he won in an 11-6 decision. That win gave him the right to challenge the fourth-place wrestler. Ford matched up against the fourth-place wrestler, and at the end of three rounds the score was even 8-8.

Downs said, "Their match

had to go into Sudden Victory, which means the first score wins. Dalton's opponent was called for stalling, which gave Dalton one point and the win. It was the most exciting and difficult match Dalton has ever wrestled in his entire wrestling career."

Ford said, "I knew going into the wrestle back match that I had to win or it would be my last high school wrestling match. I was kind of nervous, but stuck to my moves, and controlled the match. The match was back-and-forth all three rounds. I got an escape with six seconds left to tie it up and send the match into sudden death. The kid kept backing up and I won because he got a technical violation for fleeing the mat."

Martin (195 pounds) pinned his first opponent of the tourney in 18 seconds, which placed him in the semi-finals against the No. 1-seeded wrestler. Ethan struggled throughout the match and lost 2-18. In the consolation semi-finals, Ethan won his match by a fall, and that put him into the third- and fourth-place finals.

"Ethan knew if he was to lose there could be a possible fourth-place wrestle back, and he did not want to take that chance," said Downs. "He was determined to win the third-place medal. He did an amazing job and pinned his opponent in 2:18, which sealed his trip to the state championships."

Martin said, "I worked hard throughout the season to get where I am now, and was so happy to get third at districts. And, going to state has always been a dream of mine, so that's a dream come true."

Five other Outlaw wrestlers had noteworthy performances.

Daisy Patterson (126 pounds) was Sisters only girl wrestler. Daisy fought her



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The Sisters Outlaws wrestling squad closed out its season with its finest performance.

way through the 126-pounds weight class and got into the fifth- and sixth-place championships, where she pinned her opponent in 5:42. Daisy qualified for the fourth-place wrestle back, but lost by a pin.

"I was so proud of Daisy earning a fifth-place finish at the boys District Championships," said Downs.

Sophomore Chaz Patterson (132 pounds) had to wrestle the No. 1-seeded wrestler in his first match and lost by a fall. The loss sent him into the consolation bracket. He fought hard, and won three more matches, and in the final match won by a fall for a fifth-place finish.

Junior Dillon King (138 pounds) had a difficult bracket. In his first match he lost by a fall, and then in consolation he won two matches for a sixth-place finish.

Junior Anthony Randolph (145 pounds) was in the largest bracket in the tournament, and coaches knew he would have a difficult time. Anthony also fought his way through, and in the consolation round

finished sixth.

The Outlaws' big guy, Damien King (235 pounds) wrestled in the 285 pound weight class. Damien lost by a fall to the No. 1 seed in his first match of the tourney. In consolation, he battled his way to the fifth/sixth-place match where he won by a fall and earned the fifth-place finish.

"Damien did a great job fighting through the tournament," said Downs. "I was very proud of Damien to win this match because he had been back and forth with his Madras opponent all season, and seeing him finish the season pinning his opponent in 2:51 was just proof that he had vastly improved

throughout the year."

Downs commented on how proud he was of his Outlaws squad.

"I was so impressed all year with this small team!" said Downs. "Wherever we went, whatever tournament we competed in, everybody always gave me their best. We started out with 14 wrestlers, and during the season five quit because they thought wrestling was too tough. I was very proud of the nine I had left who understood the commitment it took to be an Outlaw wrestler. I'm so excited to have eight of these nine wrestlers returning to the team next year. I look forward to them being leaders and helping this program grow."

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