

TIGERS

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Robinson and Woodworth both built on their successes of a year ago to earn their first titles. Robinson, who was second in 2018 at 152 pounds after losing in overtime to Marshfield's Garrett Lefebvre, ran roughshod through the bracket at 160 pounds.

"Taking second last year was the thing that motivated me the most every time I wanted to give up on a sprint, or (not want to) do one more pullup or pushup," he said, noting that seeing the second-place citation next to his name in the Tigers' wrestling room gave him additional drive.

The top-seeded wrestler pinned his first three opponents to reach the finale, including Phoenix's Joey Wilson in 5:21 in the first round, Sweet Home's Jesse Jamison in 1:51 in the quarterfinals and Tillamook's Miquel Niemi in just 81 seconds in the semifinals.

"The reason he always wins when everyone expects him to win is he has a lot of talent and he works hard," Carson said. "He's a prime example of that."

Robinson finished off the title Saturday night by defeating Sweet Home's Hayden McDonald by an 8-2 decision.

"Winning state has been a goal since day one when I was in third grade. It's a dream come true for it to happen," the junior said.

Woodworth, who was the second seed at 195 pounds, also had little struggle getting to the finals. He pinned Cottage Grove's Austin Dempsey in 3:38, won in the quarterfinals over McLoughlin's Patton Wright by a 14-0 major decision, and topped Newport's Jimmy Acevedo by a 7-1 decision in the semifinals. The run put him up against the top seed, Macoy Christman of Cascade, in the title bout. Christman pinned his first three opponents to reach the final but was controlled by Woodworth as the La Grande junior scored a 5-2 decision for the championship.

"He's for sure the most underrated wrestler I have ever coached," Carson said, explaining Woodworth has often been overshadowed by Robinson or Nathan Reed. "He has lived in the shadow of those kids for so long. No more. He's a state champion."

Woodworth admitted he was "psyching" himself out prior to the tournament, but eventually settled in.

"State is always a little more nerve-racking than other tournaments," he said. "A lot of people expected big things from me since I was second. All that pressure (was) on me and a lot of people were telling me I could beat that first seed. Once I got rolling I gained more confidence."

Four additional Tigers reached the championship round and fell short, though none in more heartbreaking fashion than Ezra McIntosh at 120. The senior and his opponent, Tillamook's Quinten Metcalfe, wrestled to a 3-3 tie through each round of the match and the overtime sessions. It set up the ultimate tiebreaker, and McIntosh, who was forced to start in the bottom position after Metcalfe chose the top, had 30 seconds to score an escape for the win. Metcalfe, though, was able to prevent an escape and claimed the title.

"Ezra was right there. It was as close as you can get

without winning," Carson said

McIntosh reached the final with wins over Elmira's Logan Cave by a 17-0 technical fall, over Woodburn's Marcos Hernandez by fall in 2:24 and over Sweet Home's Tristan Spencer by a 13-4 major decision in the semifinals.

Braden Carson also collected a runner-up spot at 126 pounds. The freshman endured three matches that all went the distance to reach the final, defeating Woodburn's Hector Paniagua by a 14-8 decision, Baker's Alex Duran by a 6-0 decision and Woodburn's Freddy Hernandez by an 11-7 decision

in the semifinals. In the championship, he lost to Molalla's Maximus Tate by an 8-1 decision.

Grayson Livingston (170) had two dominant wins and won a squeaker en route to the title bout. He pinned Siuslaw's Riley Jennings in 3:35, edged Elmira's Nat Brown by a 2-0 decision and rolled in the semifinals over Cottage Grove's Drew Swenson by a 16-0 technical fall. His shot at a title ended, though, with a loss to Tillamook's Caleb Werner by fall in 1:06.

Rounding out La Grande's runner-ups was Spencer Gerst at 220. Gerst earned two pins in three

matches on the way to the final, topping Tillamook's Dawson McKibbin by fall in 3:53, Estacada's Nico Winsor by a 5-0 decision and pinning Junction City's Tyler Morris in 2:49 in the semifinals. He hung close with Banks' James Ellis in the championship, but fell short in a 3-0 decision.

Two other Tigers placed, with Gabe Shukle (285) coming in third and Casey McCall (138) taking fourth.

Shukle won by fall over both Cascade's Ben Fouts in 1:22 and Astoria's Skylar Smith in 2:27. He dropped the semifinal match to Henley's Mikey Sierra by fall in 2:39, but

beat Tillamook's Brian Reiger by injury default in the consolation semifinals and won the third-place match over Sweet Home's David McMullen by fall in 3:45.

McCall went 4-2, with both losses coming to Tillamook's Chad Werner, including by a 12-3 major decision in the third-place match. To get there, he pinned Sweet Home's Gavin Walberg in 3:38, lost to Werner by fall in 2:56, then beat teammate Braxton Bisenius by an 8-0 major decision, edged North Marion's Avidan Sanchez by a 5-4 decision and won the consolation semifinal match over

Phoenix's Jacky Hawkins by an 11-6 decision.

Five other Tigers didn't place but won matches to help La Grande's cause. Cole Isaacson (126) and Hayden Shafer (160) both went 2-2, and Bisenius (138), Lincoln Clark (220) and Joel Rogers (285) went 1-2.

Cody Hibbert (113), Brody MacMillian (145) and Keith Oswald (152) finished 0-2.

The Tigers scored a total of 189 points in the tournament to match its highest placing since also taking third in 2009. Tillamook was the team champion in 4A, finishing with 264.5 points. ■

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