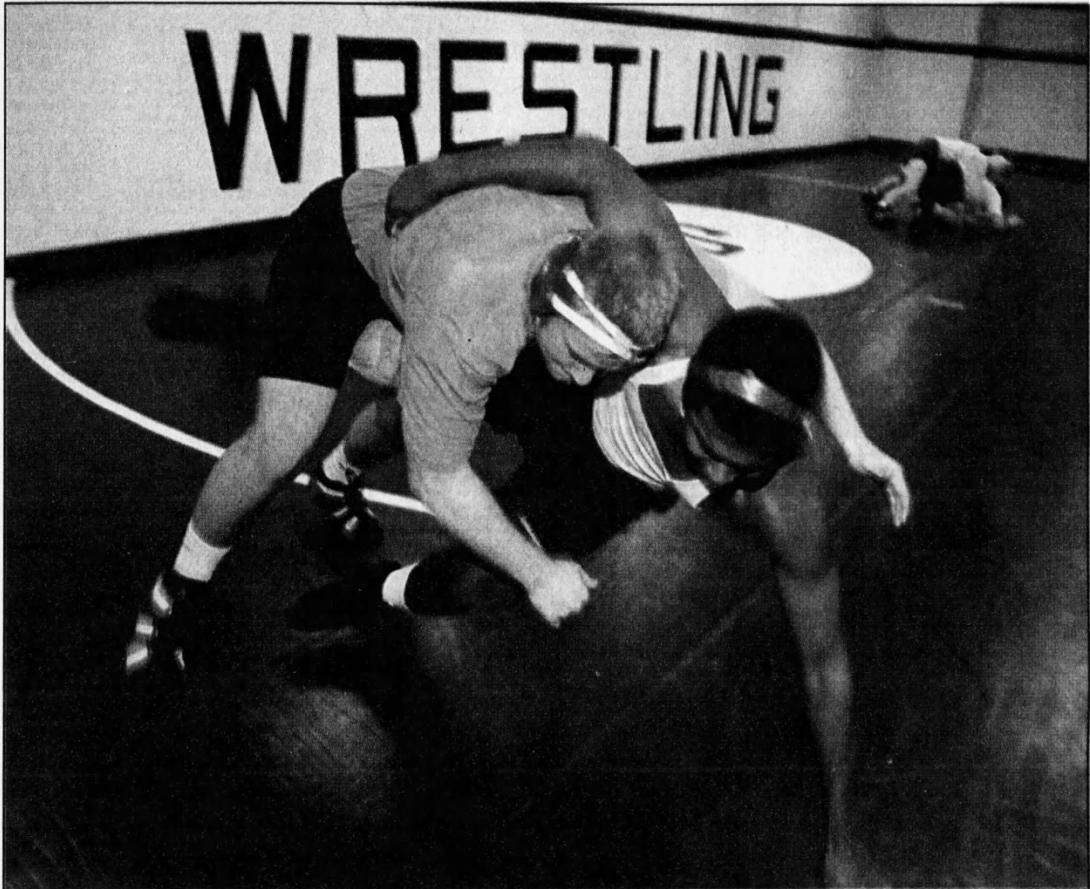


1998 District...

Wrestlers seek quick starts



News-Messenger/Andrew Morrison

AARON ROOT, left, and Eric Lindsey wrestle during practice Thursday at Fremont Ross. Both will compete at districts today in Hilliard.

First tournament matches can make or break

By BRIAN SPIESS
Sports editor

When Fremont Ross wrestler Aaron Root was beaten by Cincinnati Moeller's Sean Cronin in the first round of last year's state tournament, he lost more than a match.

He lost control.

Because he was beaten in the first round, Root needed Cronin to win his second-round match to pull Root back into the modified double-elimination tournament. The format, used in sectional, district and state tournaments, creates anxiety in the early rounds.

In Root's case, Cronin lost in Round 2, knocking the 215-pound Little Giant out of the state tournament.

"It hurts," said Root, a senior. "You work that hard all year and it can be over just like that."

Root is among 50 area wrestlers who will compete today and Saturday at district meets, hoping to qualify for next week's state meet in Fairborn.

Coaches are readying their troops for those initial battles.

"All we want them to think about is winning that first match," Oak Harbor coach George Bergman said.

Clyde coach Jim Carothers said, "The first one is critical. If you want to control your own destiny, you have to start right in that first match."

Ross coach Grover Dowell added, "It's the most important match of the year. If you lose ... you have to rely on your opponent."

Derek Wensinger, a junior who wrestles 125, is Ross's best starter.

"He comes out the quickest," Dowell said. "He's more mentally prepared right off the first whistle. The other guys take a period or two or a whole match to get into the match."

Wensinger is focusing more on his mind than his body.

"You have to get prepared mentally," Wensinger said. "At this point everyone's got the skills.

You've just got to get the mental part down."

Ross 145-pounder Tyler Lawrence is making his first appearance in districts.

"If you win the first match it takes off a lot of pressure," Lawrence said. "That way I don't have to sit around and wait for his next match."

Little Giant senior Eric Lindsey survived his 189-pound first-round match at sectionals — barely.

"I was real nervous in sectionals and it threw me out of my game in the first period," Lindsey said. "When I relaxed, I started to hit my moves. I have to be more offensive instead of waiting."

The Ross foursome will compete at the Division I district meet at Hilliard Darby High School, while wrestlers from Bellevue, Clyde and Oak Harbor wrestle in the Div. II meet at Galion. Div. III wrestlers from St. Joseph Central Catholic, Lakota, Margaretta, Woodmore and Gibsonburg travel to Fostoria.

District tournaments

Fifty wrestlers from nine area schools will compete in district tournaments today and Saturday. Here is where they will compete (with number of qualifiers):

DIVISION I

At Hilliard Darby HS

Fremont Ross (4)

DIVISION II

At Galion HS

Bellevue (11)

Clyde (10)

Oak Harbor (6)

DIVISION III

At Fostoria HS

Lakota (5)

Margaretta (5)

St. Joe (5)

Woodmore (3)

Gibsonburg (1)

(Top five wrestlers in each weight class advance)

Area wrestlers try for state today

News-Messenger reports

Fremont Ross senior Aaron Root and St. Joseph Central Catholic junior Jamie LeJeune were among the area wrestlers who reached the district semifinals Friday afternoon.

Division I wrestlers competed at Hilliard, with Div. II at Galion and Div. III at Fostoria. Competition resumes today with the top five placers in each weight class advancing to next week's state tournament in Fairborn.

Root, a 215-pounder, won a 13-8 decision against Dublin Scioto's Ken Fritz in the first round, then pinned Dublin Coffman's Eric Cole in 4:46 of his second match. Root will face Central Catholic's Josh Lennix in the semifinals.

Root's teammates — Derek Wensinger (125), Tyler Lawrence (145) and Eric Lindsey (189) — all lost their first round matches. Wensinger was pulled back into

WRESTLING

the tournament when his first round foe won a second round match.

In Div. III, LeJeune won a 12-5 major decision at 125 against Bluffton's Jeremiah Wagner in his opening match, then won by fall with 7:30 to go against A.J. Weiderhamer of Ayersville. LeJeune is scheduled to meet Josh Ranker of Seneca East in today's semifinals.

Also in 125, Lakota's Jared Lowery won by fall in 3:10 against Ryan Zimmerly of Columbus Grove and by fall in 1:33 against Hopewell-Loudon's Andy Smith. Lowery will take on Derek Rathbun of Delta in the semifinals.

Margaretta's Gregg Pressler, wrestling at 103, won 15-0 against Crestview's Joey Kuhn and 20-3

against Evergreen's Zach Meiring. He'll face Mitch Aring of Eastwood in the semifinals.

Four area heavyweights won a match before losing in Round 2. Jamey Lambright of Gibsonburg won by fall in 1:25 against Bluffton's Mike Doty, Woodmore's Greg Hoodlebrink earned a 7-2 decision against Scott Sullivan of Cory-Rawson, St. Joe's Dave Klotz won by fall in 5:56 against Kenton's Kevin Duff and Lucas Palomo of Margaretta won by fall in 3:16 against Tony Slemen of Delphos St. John's.

Lakota's Justin West (119) and Adam Thacker (171) and Margaretta's Sean Thompson (145) and Dean Bonnigson (160) each won one match.

Div. II results from Galion were not reported by the tournament manager as of press time.

District results, B2

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Monday, March 9, 1998 B1

Local schools send 25 wrestlers to state

By CHUCK KRUMEL
News-Messenger correspondent

FOSTORIA — Six wrestlers representing Fremont St. Joseph, Margaretta and Lakota high schools are among 25 area wrestlers headed to the state tournament this week at Wright State University's Nutter Center in Fairborn.

Jamie LeJeune of St. Joseph Central Catholic, Justin West, Jared Lowery and Adam Thacker of Lakota, and Gregg Pressler and Dane Bonnigson of Margaretta placed in the top five in the Division III district Saturday at Fostoria High School.

Forty-five schools participated

in the event. Delta High School amassed 218.5 team points to win the district title.

Sandusky St. Mary's was the runner-up, finishing with 95.5 points.

LeJeune finished second to Delta's Derek Rathbun in the 125-pound championship match, losing a close 11-7 decision in the title match.

LeJeune fell behind 9-1 after one period in the title match, but recovered in the second and third periods to nearly come back and steal the match from Rathbun.

"Jamie (LeJeune) in the sectional finals and again in this final, it was the first period that

hurt him," St. Joe head coach Chuck Lenhart said. "He gave up five-point move here (early in the match) and other than that it was a pretty close match."

LeJeune allowed only two more points to be scored against him in the match in rallying to try and overcome the deficit only to run out of time.

"He (Rathbun) is a good wrestler," LeJeune said. "After getting behind in the first period, it just took me out of my groove."

In addition to LeJeune, St. Joe's Mark Szymanowski (135), Adam Jenkins (189), Dave

Area state qualifiers

Twenty-five area wrestlers will compete at this week's state wrestling tournament in Fairborn. The top five wrestlers in each weight class advanced from Saturday's districts:

DIVISION I

Ross — 1 (Aaron Root, 215)

DIVISION II

Clyde — 7 (Doug West, 103; Luke Townsley, 112; Rob Jennings, 119; Lance Nofz, 125; Randall Blackburn, 135; Corey Coe, 152; Tim Anderson, 275)

Belleview — 7 (Matt DePolo, 130; Anthony Coleman, 135; Cory

Smith, 145; Chris Sharp, 152; Laramie Spurlock, 160; Russ Kuhns, 189; Courtney DeLuca, 215)

Oak Harbor — 4 (Curt Borjas, 140; Zeb Miller, 171; Pat Kanis, 215; Miles Fabian, 275)

DIVISION III

Lakota 3 (Justin West, 119; Jared Lowery, 125; Adam Thacker, 171)

Margaretta — 2 (Gregg Pressler, 103; Dane Bonnigson, 160)

St. Joe — 1 (Jamie LeJeune, 125)

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See DIVISION III, B4