

Leyden nets unusual victory in own quad

By Mike Garofola | Daily Herald Correspondent

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Leyden rocked the walls of Farina Fieldhouse on Saturday afternoon by sweeping a trio of opponents, including Crystal Lake South in an exciting dual that was decided like few other wrestling matches are.

The Eagles rolled over visiting Buffalo Grove and New Trier, then eked out a 34-33 victory against the Gators after the teams finished tied at 33-33. Leyden was announced the victor on criteria.

The hosts went 3-0 in their annual wrestling quad. The Gators' were 2-1, New Trier finished 1-2 and an injury-plagued young Bison club ended its day 0-3.

"We knew all along our dual with (Crystal Lake South) was going to be a great one, but who knew how close it would really be at the end," said Leyden coach Jason Potter, whose club was even with the Gators in matches won, falls and major decisions but ended up getting the nod when the scoreboard revealed that the Eagles had tallied more first points scored than South.

"Both (Crystal Lake South) and Crystal Lake Central are getting some very good kids coming through the Wizards wrestling club, and we knew that they would come here technically sound. So it was important to be aggressive and wrestle hard to beat them in the end, much like Friday night when we beat Hinsdale South in the last match of the night," said Potter.

"That match with Leyden was a real test for our guys today, and even in defeat, I really liked that we competed as if there was much more at stake than just a dual-team victory," said Gators coach Ross Ryan, whose club defeated Woodstock North easily on Friday, in its first action following its terrific effort at the Moore-Prettyman one week ago, where the Gators finished 7th overall.

"Now we have nearly two weeks off until traveling to the Harvard tournament, and that will give us some time to get back to training and working on specific things that the coaching staff has seen since (Moore-Prettyman) and this past week as well."

After Leyden pounded Buffalo Grove 64-6, and South defeated New Trier (37-22) in their respective openers at the Franklin Park campus, the stage was set for plenty fierce action, which saw the Gators build a 15-3 early lead with victories at 160, 171 and 189 before 2009 state medalist Dan Keibler recorded his second of three falls on the day to inspire teammate Tramon Tramos to do the same at 285 and pull the Eagles even at 15-15.

The match went back and forth after the Tramos fall, with each side gaining short-lived leads.

A bruised and battered Jesus Payan somehow sustained enough strength to defeat Nick Peters (4-1) at 112 pounds, but Cullen Smith helped the Gators get back in it with a late flurry to earn a 5-4 win over Jake McCabe at 119 pounds.

Tom Gerszewski stunned Leyden's Andy Nguyen with a fall at 5:33 to push the Gators back on top (30-27) before Kevin Lewis sparkled once again with a stealth-like strike and pin just 1:26 into his match at 140 pounds.

Trailing 33-30, Mark Mohler used a little bit of magic and a late reversal to outdo Pat Foley and appropriately end the match in a 33-33 draw.

"Mohler was just outstanding today," Ryan said of the senior, who went 3-0 on the day. "Nick (Fontanetta) was just Nick out there today, which to say, is exactly what we expect from him (he was a perfect 3-0, at 103) and others came through when we needed it, which was great to see."

Potter was equally kind in his comments afterward about Keibler, and his co-captain Lewis, who is quietly becoming one of the best in his weight class following his first-ever sectional appearance last season.

"Kevin has made great strides since the end of last season, and he has stepped forward to be clearly our team leader both vocally and by his actions," said Potter.

"I really enjoy the role as a captain and team leader, but I always feel like I can do better in that area as well," said Lewis, who made a name for himself last December when he upset eventual 2A state champion Matt Holmes (Lakes) in the early rounds of the Berman Classic at Palatine, which would help provide the impetus for his steady growth among his peers at 140 pounds. "I feel like I should never stop working to get better, and in the off-season I concentrated on my top game and stand-up and it's really helped me this season so far."

Just as the Eagles have soared during the past two days, Buffalo Grove has headed the other way, especially after hearing the bad news that its senior captain, and one of the best in the state, Jamey Zabrin, would be gone for an extended period of time with a broken bone in his foot which will require surgery Monday.

"It is a terrible blow to our team, program, and especially Jamey (himself)," said Bison coach Dave Durlacher of Zabrin, who was expected to be a serious medal candidate at 189 pounds after finishing with 38 wins and a top-eight finish at the state tournament last February.

"Jamey was the guy that everyone would look up (to) and for our very young team, and teammate which would set an example of excellence for everyone around him" added Durlacher.

"Our (morale) is really low right now," admitted senior Eugene Blackmon, who won 26 last year and is one of just a few returning veterans for Durlacher. "We're so young, and for awhile we're really going to miss having Jamey around and in our lineup."

Blackmon was 3-0 on the day, for a Bison side which was unable to fill its lineup card, and would later lose two others to injury, forcing Durlacher to give away points due to forfeit.