

CL Wizards wrestle well in Rockford

Twelve wrestlers from the Crystal Lake Wizards placed at the Illinois Kids Wrestling Federation State Tournament, held March 11-13 at the Rockford MetroCentre.

Austin Ryan led the charge for the Wizards, who won the championship in the 84-pound senior division. The Wizards' Michael Zelasco and Nick Gil placed second and third, respectively, in the 108-pound senior division.

The Wizards placed fifth in the senior division and 10th at the novice level.

Wizards coach Tony Fontanetta said he was hoping for some higher finishes after qualifying 22 wrestlers for the tournament. Overall, he said the team of 10- to 14-year olds wrestled well.

"We had a few kids who I thought should place higher," Fontanetta said. "They're still young, though."

The competition was tough, with Illinois becoming known as a wrestling hotbed. Only California has more school-aged kids wrestling in the U.S.

"As far as kids wrestling, this is their crème de la crème," Fontanetta said.

Ryan had three close matches to wrap up the tournament with a 1-0 decision in the quarterfinals, 4-3 decision in the semifinals and a 7-5 overtime decision in the championship match.

In the title match, Ryan earned a takedown with time expiring in the third period against the Wrestling Factory's Michael Cullen to even the match and send it to overtime.

"He's got composure," Fontanetta said. "He never freaks out. I feel real confident [that] when he's close we're going to come out ahead."

Fontanetta said that he expected Ryan, an eighth-grader, to excel at the high school level.

"He has a great work ethic and continues to try and make himself better," Fontanetta said. "He'll be one of the names you read about."

Fontanetta said seeing his wrestlers excel when they leave the Wizards was both a goal and a source of pride for the program.

"I want to get these kids ready for the next level," he said. "When they leave the Wizards they're ready to go."

Other Wizards placing in the novice division were: Kyle Szlenk, 62 pounds, seventh place; Garret Dziejczak, 79 pounds, sixth; Vince Turk, 89 pounds, fourth; Andrew Marsden, 108 pounds, sixth; Cody Barnes, 177 pounds, sixth.

Other Wizards placing in the senior division were: Jeff Morrow, 79 pounds, eighth; Kyle Fugiel, 95 pounds, fifth; Tommy Klinger, 130 pounds sixth; and Brian Pence, 147 pounds sixth.

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