

Catholic Central wrestlers steal show in district

By Dan O'Meara
staff writer

An awesome performance such as Catholic Central wrestlers displayed in last Saturday's district tournament is nothing new to the Shamrocks. But the ramifications are.

CC had seven champions in the Plymouth Salem district and qualified 10 wrestlers for the Class A regional, also to be contested at Salem, on Saturday.

In years past, such overwhelming numbers would have made the Shamrocks a solid contender for the state team championship, also. But that was when individuals wrestled for themselves and the team simultaneously.

The two are separate events this year, with Michigan conducting tournaments for individual wrestlers and another for teams.

The Shamrocks, rated No. 8 in the nation by USA Today and the top-ranked squad in the state, have made a good start on the road to individual success and should be favored to win the first team title under the new format.

"IT'S HARD TO get accustomed to it, be-

cause you're used to thinking your strength is in the numbers you take up (to state)," said CC coach Mike Rodriguez, a veteran of many seasons under the old combination system.

"But the dual meet is still to come. You used to figure it would take 10 to win (the state) and that number would get cut down on the way up."

The team competition began Wednesday with district tournaments, and the regionals will be Wednesday, Feb. 24.

With so many surviving the district, the Shamrocks, who have won nine of 10 tournaments, are certain to have a big impact on the individual tourney, too.

Heavyweight Toby Heaton, Jay Helm (119), Matt Helm (126), Brendon Rock (136), Mike Rodriguez (145), Chris Lemanski (167) and Lee Krueger (198) were the best in their respective weight classes at the district. Kevin Rowe (98) and Mike Gentile (112) were second and Ted Rieple (185) third.

HEATON IS 51-1, Krueger 51-1-1, Matt Helm 47-2, Gentile 43-6-1, Rodriguez 40-5, Rieple 44-10, Jay Helm 40-5, Rock 33-6,

Rowe 35-17 and Lemanski 28-3-1.

"It's conceivable seven guys could win by themselves," said Rodriguez, adding Gentile has an excellent shot, too. "This year we're very, very strong."

While Heaton is the defending state champion, Matt Helm was fifth at 126 last year and Krueger sixth at 167. Furthermore, CC is a young team; Heaton, Rock and Lemanski are the only seniors among the 16 going to the regional.

Livonia Stevenson will take six wrestlers to the regional, Salem five, Plymouth Canton three, Redford Union two, Farmington and Livonia Franklin one apiece. In addition, North Farmington qualified one at the Walled Lake Western district.

Stevenson's Mike Schrock (119), Kurt Will (145), Mike Parr (155) and Jarrod Wilkinson (187) took second place. Dave Wojciechowski (105) was third and Brandon Marossian (98) fourth. Six is the most the Spartans have qualified since Don Berg became coach in 1981.

"I'VE GONE TO a couple regionals with only one kid," Berg said. "It's going to be different being there with so many."

"It was the culmination of a good effort by some boys who've been with me for three years and some newcomers. They decided to wrestle on Saturday."

While the Spartans were excluded from the winner's circle, they had four who took runner-up honors after close calls against excellent opponents.

Wojciechowski narrowly missed getting to the championship round when he lost a 2-1 decision in overtime to the eventual winner from Southfield Lathrup. Will battled CC's Rodriguez, the Catholic League champ, for three periods in the final before losing a 1-3 decision.

"They all could have been first," said Berg of the four runners-up, "which really would have blown my mind."

CANTON'S TOM Flores, ranked among the top five in the state and a nonafide contender at 105 pounds, won the district title over Rowe, and Farmington's Rob Woodbeck was the 132-pound champ, winning a decision over Canton freshman Liam Reutz in the final.

Salem did well in the lower weights, with Jeff Delbeck (105) taking second. Dave

Mang (112) third, Todd Hourlier (119) fourth, Mike Shumate (126) third and Steve Hurlston (155) fourth.

The Rocks might have qualified six, also, had 98-pound Matt Kononki not suffered torn ligaments in a shoulder. He won his first two bouts, including the one in which he was injured, but had to withdraw.

"We felt we had some other kids who could have gotten through," Salem coach Ron Krueger said, "but it seems we met up with CC at every turn and got clobbered."

"I felt we could have gotten 8-9 or out had we not run into CC at the times that we did."

KRUEGER ADDED the district competition was above average and there were "no weak people" there, with teams such as South Lynn, Novi and Ann Arbor Pioneer complementing the Overland teams.

The finals didn't get under way until 8 p.m., because there were so few pins and many of the matches went into overtime. Others advancing from the Salem district included Canton's Jerry French (heavyweight) and Rantz Redford Union's John Nicholas (132) and Chris Woodbeck (138); and Livonia Franklin heavyweight Frank Johnson.

Harrison gymnasts triumph

Jenny Rick won three events to pace Farmington Hills Harrison to its second gymnastics victory of the season Monday.

The Hawks, with Rick winning the vault, uneven bars and floor exercise, scored 85.3 to Bloomfield Hills Lakes' 79.2. Harrison is 2-0 overall.

Rick scored 8.0 on vault, 6.5 on bars and 7.0 on floor exercise. She also was second on the balance beam (7.0) and had an all-around score of 28.5.

Harrison's Amy Solomon won the beam competition with a 7.3, placed fourth on vault and bars and took fifth place on floor. Michelle Doecker was fourth on vault and Julie Robbins third on beam.

Vlk triple winner for Falcons

Farmington's Jim Vlk won two individual events and was on the winning freestyle relay team Tuesday when the Falcons were dealt a 105-60 setback by West Bloomfield.

Vlk won the individual medley with a 2:09.13 time and the 500-yard freestyle with a 5:09.48 effort.

Vlk, Brad Moore, Adam Krause and Scott Hawkins combined for a first-place time of 3:35.11 in the relay.

Farmington, 1-6 overall, also captured first in the backstroke with Hawkins winning that event in 1:01.66.

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