

Cummalaj captures regional crown

The tougher the competition is the better North Farmington wrestler Zalm Cummalaj seems to do.

The 185-pound junior, who was second in the individual district tournament on Saturday, Feb. 13, won the regional championship last Saturday at Clio High School.

Cummalaj will be seeded among the top four wrestlers in his weight class when the Class A state finals are contested Saturday at the Kellogg Center in Battle Creek.

"Zalm wrestled the best he has ever wrestled," said North coach Dick Cook, adding Cummalaj defeated a wrestler who had beaten the No. 1-ranked wrestler in the state at 198.

In his second regional bout, Cummalaj pinned Traverse City's Mike Nadlicki in 1:35, and it was Nadlicki who had defeated Ulice's Mark Hunter, considered the best in the state, earlier in the season.

LAKE ORION'S Curt Phillips, who had beaten Cummalaj for the district title and won the Oakland County championship last December, was third in the regional.

Cummalaj's first two bouts ended quickly as he pinned Davidson's Mark Brannon in 1:31 to begin the day and then disposed of Nadlicki.

In the final, he won a 9-5 decision from

wrestling

Clio's Ian Hearn, who had been bridging his back in the last 30 seconds to avoid being pinned, too. Hearn had beaten Phillips on a 6-2 decision earlier in the day.

Cummalaj boasts a 39-4 record with a school-record 33 pins. Going into the regional, Hearn was 44-4, Nadlicki 38-2 and Brannon 33-13. Cook believes Cummalaj, at the rate he is going, will have more than 100

pins by the time he completes his high school career.

"He's looking good," said Cook, adding Cummalaj is wrestling smarter at this point in the season. "He's using a lot more technique than he used to."

"If he wrestled that well at state, he'd win it going away. On a given day, things can change, but he's wrestling at the quality level he should be now."

WHEN HE FACED Phillips in the district, Cummalaj was leading 12-5 when the Lake Orion wrestler took advantage of a sudden

change to score a pin. Cook thought Cummalaj would fare better in the regional, even if he faced Phillips again.

"To tell you the truth, I thought he would, because he didn't wrestle a very good match against Phillips either time," he said.

Novi's Brett Keir, Redford Catholic Central's Lee Krueger and Cummalaj figure to be among the favorites, along with Hunter, at the state finals. Cummalaj has beaten Keir, who upset Krueger to win the regional at Plymouth Salem.

Farmington will be represented at the state meet by Rob Woodbeck, who was fourth in the 132-pound division at the Salem regional.

Shamrock wrestlers send 9 to state meet

By Dan O'Meara
staff writer

Redford Catholic Central just might be the best-represented team in the history of the state wrestling tournament when the top high school matmen from across Michigan converge on Battle Creek Saturday.

The Shamrocks will have nine wrestlers competing in the finals at Kellogg Center after all but one got through the individual regional tourney last Saturday at Plymouth Salem.

An astounding seven won regional championships — a record even for a school laden tradition in the sport — while the other two were consolation winners.

"And they all have a shot" of possibly bringing home state titles, said CC coach Mike Rodriguez, who said he expected his team to do well in the regional but was surprised at its extraordinary success.

"We had seven winners, but it wasn't a walkover," he said. "The competition was pretty keen."

CC WINNERS included heavyweight Toby Heaton, Mike Gentile (112), Jay Helm (119), Matt Helm (126), Brendon Rock (138), Chris Rodriguez (145) and Chris Lemanski (167). Ted Rieple (185) and Lee Krueger (198) placed third.

Observing had one other champion in Westland John Glenn's 132-pound Rob Matigan, and nine others also qualified for the state finals.

The Shamrocks won some "squeaker matches" and capitalized on their narrow advantage at several venues to compile an impressive list of winners.

Lemanski (25-3-1) edged Novi's Ron Fritz 2-1 in the semifinals and scored a takedown in the last 10 seconds to beat Dan Price of Temperance Bedford 7-5 in the final. Chris Rodriguez (46-5) won a 2-1 decision over Adrian's Henry Nieto in the championship bout.

Gentile (45-5-1) had to come from behind to defeat Tim Kosikowski of Romulus in the finals. He eventually won 2-0 in overtime.

"I didn't think Mike was going to get out of it. I thought he was going to be second," Rodriguez said. "He

came around in the last period and started to pound on the boy."

"THAT SHOWS where our conditioning came into play. We didn't overpower people, but somewhere (Gentile) had the energy to do what he had to do. He took (Kosikowski) down and kept him down."

Krueger, who had beaten Brett Keir in three previous meetings this season, was upset by the Novi wrestler in the semis. Keir went on to win the regional title by pinning Vic Watkins of Monroe, while Krueger, who won by injury default over Glenn's Abe Zakheim in the consolation final, will have a chance to redeem himself in this weekend's final.

"It doesn't hurt him," Rodriguez said. "If anything, it helped him mentally."

"He was working hard, and now he's working even harder. It's better that it happened this week instead of up at state."

Heaton (55-1) will attempt to defend the state crown he won last year, and that plus his success this year makes him the favorite in the heavyweight class.

"I'd rather be in Toby's shoes than anybody else's at state," Rodriguez said. "He'll be tested, but he's been there before."

"HE'S A VERY calm, cool person. Even when he lost down in Ohio, he didn't fall apart. He understood where he made mistakes, and I was very proud of him."

For someone so seriously challenge Heaton, that wrestler will "have to be in terrific condition" and "have a keen mind to outwit him," according to Rodriguez.

CC's coach believes the Shamrocks will have an advantage at state since they've traveled widely to compete and have been exposed to many of the top teams and wrestlers in the state.

"The nine going (to state) have good credibility, because they've been in major tournaments, not just one," Rodriguez said. "If we're hot, we can get seven through — and that would be a first."

Glenn's Matigan defeated an old nemesis, Jeff Smith

of Lincoln Park, in the 132-pound semis and won the championship with a 9-6 win over Southgate's Brian Eastman, who was the only undefeated wrestler in the regional with a 41-0 record prior to that bout.

"Rob carried the match to Eastman," Glenn coach Tom Buckalew said. "He dominated the match with the exception of 15 seconds."

"IT WAS ONE of the finest matches he's wrestled this year. I hope he's got a few more left in him."

"The Lincoln Park kid has been tougher than nails on Rob all year and even beat him once," Buckalew added. "But as much as that match was special, beating Eastman was even more special."

Zakheim also qualified for state at 198, while Salem, with three going to state, was second only to CC among

area teams in the number of wrestlers it got through the regional.

The Rocks will be represented by Jeff Delbeck (105, third), Dave Mang (112, fourth) and Steve Burlison (155, fourth).

"Going into the day, we didn't have any one sure thing," Salem coach Ron Krueger said.

He noted Mang had to beat the Bedford district champ, Jim Dec of Bedford, just to get into the consolation final. "Any time you beat a Bedford wrestler, you know you've beaten somebody good," Krueger said.

Other wrestlers advancing include Wayne Memorial's Brian Hunt (105, second), Stevenson's Kurt Will (145, third), Canton's Tom Flores (98, fourth), Redford Union's Chris Woodbeck (138, fourth) and Farmington's Rob Woodbeck (132, fourth).

Raiders tip John Glenn in volleyball

When the game is on the line, nobody comes through in the clutch better than Kelly Coulson of the North Farmington volleyball team.

Coulson came through again when the Raiders needed a lift, scoring six points in the final game to help North win the match against host Westland John Glenn, 15-11, 9-15, 15-7, Monday night.

North's Suzi Bulcher, Pam Konjarevich and Carrie Lee also played major roles in the victory.

Bulcher led the way, going 18-for-20 in serves and having eight kills. Konjarevich and Lee finished with eight and nine points, respectively.

The Raiders increased their record to 24-7.



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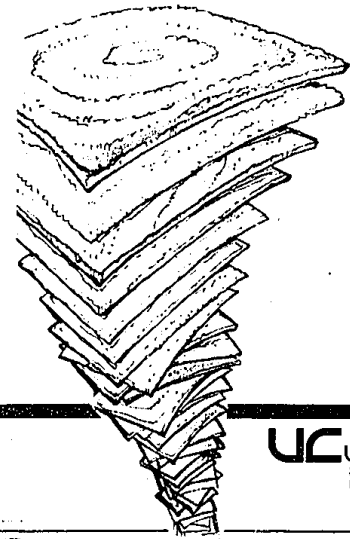
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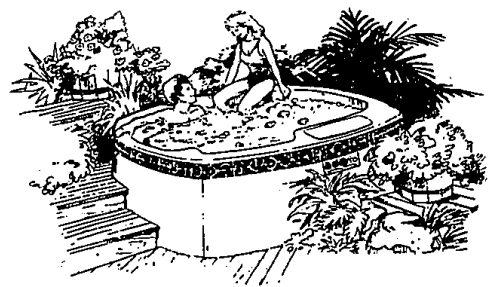
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