

Warriors building momentum on the wrestling mats

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The Warriors appear to be the team to beat in H-DNL boys wrestling this winter, while the Del Norte girls are also expected to make some serious noise in league and beyond in the coming weeks.

The Warriors officially got the league schedule under way last Friday with a 69-9 dual meet victory over McKinleyville in boys action, as they continue to build momentum heading toward the business end of the season.

The dual meet win followed the team's impressive showing at the two-day Lou Bronson tournament at Liberty High School the previous weekend.

The boys placed third overall out of 68 teams at the two-day post-Christmas tournament, while the Del Norte girls placed 17th out of 64 teams at the Brittney David tournament, also held at Liberty High.

"We had a good solid tournament," head coach Clinton Schaad said. "We placed third out of 68 teams. It's hard to be upset with that."

More importantly, the Warriors are getting healthy at the right time and improving week-to-week as they head into league action.

Nine of the 11 boys who traveled for the recent tournament reached at least the quarterfinals in their respective brackets, with eight of them placing.

And that, according to Schaad, was the Warriors' best-ever showing at this tournament, which they have traveled to compete in for several years.

But despite the success, the coaches know there will be bigger challenges ahead and the Warriors are not getting carried away.

"The kids are wrestling real well right now and they're working hard," Schaad said. "We're happy, not satisfied."

Curtis Bartley has been one of the team's most impressive performers through the first half of the season and that continued at the Lou Bronson where he placed second overall in the 132-pound division, suffering just his first loss of the season in the championship showdown.

"It was good," Schaad said of the performance. "We got to see him make some mistakes and we'll work on it and that won't happen again."

Freshman Chuls Bates continued his impressive debut campaign at the high school level and placed third at 106, with his only loss of the tournament coming against a section placer from last year.

Sophomore Braydan Johnson, meanwhile, enjoyed a breakout tournament while filling in at 184 for Rey Martinez, who was unable to make the trip, and placed an impressive fourth.

"Braydan had a fantastic tournament," the head coach said. "We were really happy to see that."

Sophomore Colton Schaad also had a good tournament and placed fifth at 162, while Eric Stansbury placed sixth in a deep 128-pound bracket that featured several state contenders, and Jase Mintonye placed sixth at 195.

Rounding out an impressive showing for the team, Isaac Lopez was seventh at 140 and Alex Osborne was seventh at 115 despite battling sickness.

The team arguably got stronger for Friday's dual meet, with senior RJ Loftin back in the lineup after missing much of the early season with an injury he picked up in football.

Loftin won at 172 with a pin just 50 seconds in, as the Warriors showcased their depth with a dominating team victory that saw them win 12 of the 14 matches, including five with a pin in the opening minute.

Johnson remained hot and won with a pin at 184 just 36 seconds in, while Hunter Loftin (220), Soren Lewis (154) and Colton Schaad (162) each also won their matches with an early pin.

Osborne (115), Stansbury (128) and Bartley (132) each also won with a pin, while Willie Bommelyn won with an 8-6 decision at 147 and three other Del Norte wrestlers won by forfeit.

Del Norte girls

The Del Norte girls did not compete in the dual meet, but all five of their wrestlers had a strong showing at the Liberty High tournament.

Adenne Schaad and Karlye Dodson both placed fourth in their brackets, while Channey Schaad won the consolation championship after battling back from an opening loss to win four straight matches.

Autumn Thompson also placed sixth, while Tescha Gensaw was eighth, making for a solid overall team performance despite the small roster.

“It’s a small squad,” the head coach said. “They may be small in numbers, but their effort is big.”

The H-DNL Championships will take place at Fortuna on Feb. 11.