

Three qualify for state

Written by Deb Egenberger
Thursday, 16 February 2012 14:31 -



Spiegel, Eggleston, Ehlers all headed back to Omaha.

Every wrestling coach knows the district meet comes with its share of ups and downs.

It's that time of year when wrestlers either win or check in.

Lucky is the coach who can walk away from the meet carrying more highs than lows.

"It's just so emotional," said Swede coach Tom Scott. "We told the kids that now is the time when they can't hold anything back. I think they did a really good job of leaving everything on the mat."

Three of the eight Swede wrestlers in the B-4 district meet at Gothenburg earned the right to continue their seasons at the state meet in Omaha this week.

The rest came away wishing for more.

Gothenburg finished 10th of the 12 teams in the standings with 68 points.

Alliance took the team title with 160 points, just ahead of Cozad with 150 and Scottsbluff with 142.5.

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State qualifiers

Senior Dane Ehlers had only one goal in mind: A district heavyweight championship.



Ehlers entered the B-4 district meet with a 39-4 record and achieved his goal by winning three straight.

In his first matchup during the championship quarter-finals Friday, Ehlers pinned Alex Closson of Gering during the second period.

He came back on Saturday to win an 11-4 decision over Edwin Perdomo of Lexington and then defeated James Brown of Cozad 5-0 in the championship.

“Dane’s success through the year has set him up to be successful at state,” Scott said. “He gets focused so well and is a very determined wrestler.”

In his third appearance at state, Ehlers will open against Austin Dishman, a junior from Grand Island Northwest who has a 20-16 record.

Mitch Spiegel, a Swede senior who wrestles at 106 pounds, will make his fourth trip to the state meet after finishing second in his district weight class.

“Mitch is wrestling very well on his feet and really taking it to kids,” Scott said.

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Spiegel earned a bye in the first round and defeated Baily Hort of Gering in an 8-2 decision Friday evening to advance in the championship bracket.

Spiegel faced Walker Johnson of Alliance in the semi-finals.

“He made me a little nervous in that semi-final round but he got the win and that’s what matters,” Scott said.



That secured Spiegel’s ticket to state and his appearance in the district championship where he faced Brian Messersmith of Cozad.

Spiegel was ranked No. 1 by HuskerMat.com and Messersmith came in at No. 2.

When the two met during the conference meet a week ago, Spiegel came out on top in a 3-1 overtime match.

But Saturday’s final round was a different story as Messersmith earned the title with a 5-4 double overtime win.

“It was a really close finals match,” Scott said.

Spiegel has earned sixth and fifth place medals the past two years at state, respectively, and is out for more hardware this year.

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“He’s going to have a tough bracket,” Scott said. “I think he’s going to have some battles.”

Spiegel faces Mason Wright of Elkhorn South, a freshman with a 36-19 record.

Fellow senior Bryce Eggleston had to go about qualifying for state the hard way.

He came back through the 138-pound consolation bracket, wrestling six matches in two days.

Eggleston pinned his first opponent Seth Shields of Lexington before falling to Francisco Garcia of Gering Friday night.

He worked his way through the wrestle-backs Saturday by pinning Lukias Higer of Sidney and Luke Tinnon of Ogallala to land in the heartbreak round against Logan Hunke of Cozad.

“The kid from Cozad is the same kid who beat Bryce last year to keep him from going to state,” Scott said. “Bryce really went after it. He won three elimination matches in a row, two against previous state qualifiers.”

Eggleston managed a 7-3 decision win over Hunke amid an electric atmosphere to guarantee his second trip to state, despite being pinned by Kyle Groshong of McCook in the consolation finals to finish fourth.

Eggleston goes back to state after qualifying his sophomore season.

He will start out the state meet against Eric Knight of Central City, a senior with a 35-4 record.

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“The goal for all three of these kids is to bring home medals,” Scott said. “They’re going to have to wrestle well but at the state meet, anything can happen.”

Heartbreak happens

Three Gothenburg wrestlers found themselves in a do-or-die situation in the consolation bracket on Saturday.

Senior Justin Larson won his first match over Tristan Donelson of Scottsbluff in the 145-pound class on Friday to advance to the semi-finals but fell in a 9-4 decision to Tyson Dowler of Alliance first thing Saturday.

That pushed Larson into the heartbreak round against Charles Burkhardt of Gering Saturday afternoon.

“He was in the same situation last year,” Scott said.

Larson held off Burkhardt through the first period and went up 1-0 with an escape in the second frame.

In the third period, Burkhardt started down.

“Justin is really good on top so I was confident in him,” Scott said.

But when Larson moved in to put Burkhardt to his back, he slipped and got caught for a takedown, ultimately losing the match by a 2-1 decision.

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“It’s painful when a kid like that who works so hard falls short,” Scott said. “Justin has never taken the easy route. He’s just one of those kids you want to will to victory.”

Dalton Goodwin and Skyler Kottwitz found themselves in a similar position in the heartbreak round.

Kottwitz, sophomore at 160 pounds, had a huge win Friday over Jessy Richard of Gering, pinning Richard in 4:36.

After losing to eventual champion Colby Riesen of Chadron, Kottwitz was pitted against Jay Brass of Broken Bow in the consolation semi-finals.

Kottwitz was leading Brass in points in the fourth period when he got caught in a bad situation and pinned.

“He brings back a lot of potential for next year,” Scott said.

Goodwin also lost in the semi-finals of the 170-pound class in an 8-6 decision to Jed Weis of Scottsbluff.

“He had the kid beat but we didn’t get the breaks,” Scott said.

Avery Petit of Gering, who defeated Goodwin a couple weeks previous in Lexington, got the best of him again.

Goodwin fell in a 7-3 decision.

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Tyler Block and Tyson Miller didn't make it as far as the heartbreak round but Scott said they both wrestled their hearts out.

Block, a 152-pound wrestler, won a match in the consolation bracket Saturday morning but couldn't get past Brian Sunblade of Holdrege in the quarter-finals to advance.

Scott said Miller wrestled his best of the season but came up against tough competition.

"Tyson had not scored an offensive point at the varsity level and he nearly had the kid from Chadron pinned on Saturday," the coach said. "There's more hope for the future."

Class B wrestling begins at the state meet at 9:30 a.m. Thursday.