

After years of close calls, **Dutch Fork's wrestling** team finally broke through and won a Class AAAA state dual championship. Silver Foxes coach B.D. LaPrad shared some of his thoughts with staff writer Patrick Obley this week.

Q: What's it like to finally get over the hump?

A: I guess it's all about how you think about it. Rock Hill had been the dominant team for so long. Summerville then was the dominant team when Rock Hill was down and they'd both end up beating us. I think it's more of a mental thing for a team when it gets down to the finals. It really did mean a lot to the kids. An actual team victory. We've probably had some teams that had a few more strong individuals, but I think this team is the best.

Q: Duals are kind of different from regular **wrestling** formats, aren't they?

A: Yes. It's all about the matchups. It comes down to the lowest thing. In this, the stars almost nullify themselves because you know they're going to win. And, you know the other guy has four or five wrestlers he knows will win. So, it comes down to your marginal ones. They're the ones that pull you through.

Q: Duals are interesting in that it's not just a matter of winning or losing. It's about how it's done - a decision instead of a pin. A lot of teams have lost a match because when they won matches, they didn't pin the other guy, right?

A: Oh, yes. Eric Harris, our 112-pounder, didn't even wrestle last year and he ended up **wrestling** the No. 1 wrestler in the state. He was beat by one point Saturday, but right there he saved us three points by not getting pinned. Matt Firtko lost, but it was a five- point loss and not a six-point loss. We had another wrestler that was on his back the whole match but didn't get pinned. It's so good because everybody has to contribute.

Q: This is your second state title (LaPrad's first came at Irmo in 1979). Which one is sweeter?

A: I think this one probably is. The first one when I was at Irmo, I had only been coaching three or four years. You always say you're going to do it again and again. You don't think it would be that long to do it again. This one probably meant more. I don't know how many times I've been second. The kids really had to pull together. The senior captains did a great job motivating the kids.

Q: How sweet was it to win on Irmo's floor?

A: Being at Irmo for so long and having a state championship there, the rivalry with Irmo really isn't a hate-thing with me. (Former Irmo athletics director) Joe Turbeville came up to me before the match Saturday and said, 'This should be like a home match for you.' You know what? We could have wrestled in the parking lot and it wouldn't have mattered.

Q: When we talked earlier in the season you said the team had a number of injuries and illnesses afflicting it. Was it that way for most of the season?

A: Yeah, we never had our full lineup in until the last match of the season. I think somewhere last week, in fact. It has been such a struggle trying to figure out how we would do, but every time the smoke cleared we've still been standing. That gave us a lot of confidence. It has been a struggle but the kids responded in a positive manner.

Q: I guess this is what's interesting about high school **wrestling**. Your season isn't over. The individual state championships are later this month.

A: That's right. We came together (Monday) morning to practice. Some kids were battling injuries and illness, but it was a lot better coming in this Monday than it was coming in Monday last year at this time. I just told the kids to take this day and enjoy it. (Tuesday) we'll be back at full speed. Winning the team title was a goal, but our individuals have a lot of goals, too.

2002-2003 ROSTER

Neil Selke

Matt Firtko

Guy Caskey

T.J. Selke

Blake Teague

Ryan Jones

Nick Leone

Eric Harris

Kyle Kimrey

Jacob Neal

Chris Carpenter

Trey McDaniel

Eric Lambert

David Estes

J.C. Greene

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