

New Fairfield wrestling team routs Newtown, stays unbeaten in SWC

Chris Brodeur

Updated 11:24 pm, Thursday, January 3, 2013

NEWTOWN -- Over the course of a five-win, 18-loss, blowout-laden high school wrestling season, the beatings tend to blur into one.

New Fairfield senior captain Mikey Amorando -- a junior and a rare source of victories when the Rebels posted that mark a year ago -- filed away at least one particularly lopsided score, which made it that much sweeter when it was settled Thursday night.

"Newtown beat us last year 60-20," Amorando said minutes after the rematch, held in dim light at Newtown High's Hawk's Nest, went in quite a different direction. "We were pretty close to pulling off the opposite."

A 57-21 Rebels victory highlighted by seven pinfalls brought their overall record to 7-1 and a perfect 6-0 in the South-West Conference, their old script apparently flipped.

And the galvanizing moment, Amorando said, was, fittingly, a stunning reversal by Shawn Graves in his 285-pound match against Stephen Grasso. Inches from getting pinned by Grasso in the first round's waning seconds, Graves wriggled loose and vaulted himself over the top for a show-stopping pin -- the Rebels' fifth straight in a string that eventually hit six -- in 1:44, setting off an eruption from the New Fairfield bench.

"After Shawn's pin, it really kind of opened up our eyes that we're a good team," said Amorando, who recently collected his 100th career victory. "I've been wrestling since second grade, and ever since then we haven't really been strong because we haven't had enough guys. This is the first year, and it's my last year, and I'm really proud that we've got everything together."

The Rebels began to assert their dominance with Amorando's pin of Forrest Speed 1:31 into their 170-pound match. Fellow senior Will Hess followed with a pin at 182 pounds, Kerrick McGlaughlin did the same at 195 and Ryan Tharas repeated the feat at 220.

With Newtown forfeiting the two lowest weight classes, Graves' heavyweight pin put the lead out of reach.

"That turnaroud (from Graves) really put the icing on the cake," said New Fairfield's third-year coach Paul Musso, who is hopeful the Rebels can offer some challenge to New Milford's conference supremacy. "We have our numbers up this year, but it's a process. We're a tough team to beat but we have a long way to go."

The Nighthawks managed to collect three pins of their own, including Logan Walsh's pin of Mike Handlemaier in the opening match at 145 pounds. The Rebels, however, are a vastly different unit

than the one the Nighthawks dismantled in Dan McIlrath's first year at the helm.

"(Musso) has done a phenomonal job with the program over there," said McIlrath. "He's building their reputation back up in terms of being a fun, exciting team to be a part of."

Newtown sold T-shirts to benefit the Sandy Hook Community Fund and the Youth Wrestling Scholarship Fund in memory of 6-year-old Sandy Hook victim Jack Pinto, who participated in Newtown's youth wrestling program.

The Associated Press reported Thursday that The Kiki Cup, an international Greco-Roman wrestling dual meet which pits international teams against American teams, has been renamed the Jack Pinto Cup. This year's event will be held in Colorado Springs, Colo., on Jan. 26.

The Nighthawks also honored former Newtown High wrestler and 2008 graduate Joel Minalgo, who died suddenly at the age of 23 on Jan. 1.

NEW FAIRFIELD 57, NEWTOWN 21 (at Newtown): 106: Alec Opsal (NF) by forfeit; 113: Shelby Simpson (NF) by forfeit; 120: Taylor Shay (NF) pinned Ryan King, 1:55; 126: Matt Gonzalez (N) pinned Danny Amorando, :40; 132: Tyler Cerlik (NF) pinned Danny Lajoie, 1:19; 138: James Leuci (N) dec. Tyler Burlinson, 8-2; 145: Logan Walsh (N) pinned Michael Handlemaier, :26; 152: Andrew D'Amico (NF) dec. Chase Hutchinson, 4-1; 160: Ed Lajoie (N) pinned Connor Yorrio, 1:07; 170: Mikey Amorando (NF) pinned Forrest Speed, 1:31; 182: Will Hess (NF) pinned Max Temple, 4:38; 195: Kerrick McLaughlin (NF) pinned Andy Hubina, 3:26; 220: Ryan Tharas (NF) pinned Trey Dewald, 1:31; 285: Shawn Graves (NF) pinned Stephen Grasso, 1:44. Records: New Fairfield 7-1 (6-0 SWC); Newtown 7-4.