

Southington climbs ladder in The Bulletin's State H.S. Wrestling Coaches' Poll

Monday

Posted Jan 9, 2017 at 6:11 PM

Updated Jan 9, 2017 at 10:45 PM

By **Marc Allard**

mallard@norwichbulletin.com, (860) 425-4212

[Follow](#)

Southington has yet to have the lineup that coach Derek Dion envisioned on the mat for a match this season.

That's good news for the Blue Knights, since many voting in The Bulletin state wrestling coaches' poll already consider them a top-10 team.

"I think we're going to be very strong, once we get our full team out there," Dion said. "If we had our 220 or 285-pounder out there in the Lowell (Mass.) tournament, we could have finished third instead of sixth. We just have to get healthy and get kids into their right weight classes."

Southington, which hadn't been in the top 10 since the final poll of 2013 until last week when it made its debut at No. 9, climbed the ladder a little more in a week abbreviated for many by Saturday's snowstorm.

The Blue Knights leap-frogged past Windham into a tie for the No. 7 ranking with Xavier of Middletown this week.

It was one of the few changes in the weekly poll.

The other happened even further up the chain.

Danbury was again the unanimous choice for the top spot, getting the No. 1 vote from all 15 coaches who voted.

Last week's No. 2 squad, Bristol Eastern, slipped back behind New Milford to third, with the Green Wave taking back the No. 2 spot by just five voting points.

Newtown and Fairfield Warde complete the top five with Trumbull in the No. 6 spot. Windham dropped back from eighth to ninth with Ledyard continuing to anchor the poll at No. 10.

Dion said he tries to break the wrestling season down into three distinct sections for his Southington squad.

December is reserved for recruitment and technique work.

"It's just so screwed up at the end. You have morning practices, tournaments and there is just no continuity," Dion said.

That's why this month is so important.

"Teams get into the grind now. You work on drills and systematic approaches. Everyone is getting into shape for the big matches in February," Dion said.

Those matches could be very big for the Blue Knights who will look to battle the likes of Fairfield Warde, Newtown, Xavier and Trumbull in Class LL. Dion concedes that those teams are fighting for a second-place finish in LL with Danbury still out there as the unbeatable foe.

But for Southington, the January grind might have acquired a new sense of purpose with the Blue Knights in the top 10.

"I think it helps the kids, gives them a sense of pride," Dion said. "I know when we wrestle a top-10 team, the kids get amped up for it."

Southington had now best be prepared for similar treatment from its opponents.