

New Milford wrestlers gear up for home tournament with win over Masuk

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New Milford's Richard Morrell, top, wrestles Masuk's Zachary Minch in their 160lb match at New Milford, Jan. 18, 2018.

NEW MILFORD — The 36th annual New Milford High School Wrestling Tournament is set for Saturday, and the host Green Wave prepared to defend its home turf by beating South-West Conference foe Masuk 56-16 Thursday night.

All teams want to be wrestling their best when the championship meets roll around, and while Saturday's tournament won't necessarily be for a championship, there is an awful lot of hometown pride at stake.

"It's always nice to wrestle in front of your town, and in front of the program that you're a part of," New Milford coach Chris Piel said. "So when the kids come down from the

feeder program and they work the tables – and these guys who are wrestling on the team, most of them came through that program – it means a lot to everyone involved.”

The Green Wave won its home tournament last year with 215 points, 81 more than second-place Bristol Eastern. The tournament was canceled because of snow in 2016 after the Wave had won back-to-back in 2014 and 2015. The team from Franklin, Mass., dealt New Milford a rare defeat in its tournament in 2013, and before that, New Milford had won every year from 2004 to 2011, with the 2005 and 2012 events also being canceled because of snow.

“When we go in there, we know we have to do what’s best for the team, not individual stuff,” Green Wave senior Mike Haggerty said. “All those wins are nice to put under your belt, but we’re all about the team. If you get a pin out there, it’s for the team, it’s not for yourself.”

The tournament will once again feature a strong field, including fifth-ranked New Milford and eighth-ranked Xavier of Middletown, along with Simsbury, Wilton and Ludlowe, which all received some votes in the state poll. Bristol Eastern, last year’s runner-up in the New Milford Tournament and eventual Class L state champ, will be wrestling in the Suffern (N.Y.) Tournament.

THURSDAY’S SHOWDOWN

Brandon Leonard (120 pounds), Julian Reza (195) and Mike Haggerty (220) all scored first-period pins for New Milford, with Reza winning in 24 seconds, Leonard in 25 and Haggerty in 1:45. Richard Morrell (160) and Kyle Fabich (182) both won by major decision, and Shayn Donaldson (106), Pete Coniglio (113), Mel Ortiz (126), Colin Lindner (132) and Tyler Schultz (138) won by forfeit.

“Even though not everyone wrestled, we have things to adjust and things to fix,” Ortiz said. “There’s always room to get better. I feel like today was a good eye-opener.”

Numbers are down a bit at Masuk, as is evidenced by the Panthers’ six forfeits (including the 285-pound match, which was a double forfeit). The wrestlers they do have, however, have reason to be excited, especially with the championship tournaments on the horizon.

"We're short on numbers, so the numbers that we have, we need to use to our advantage," Masuk coach Cody Hoskins said. "As long as my kids push and give 110 percent each match, I'm happy regardless of the outcome.

"Dual meets aren't really where we shine," Hoskins continued. "It's the individual stuff where we try to shine."

Curtis Fedorko (145) and Rodolfo Mathews (170) both recorded pins for Masuk, and Jason Lobdell (152) won a major decision.

NEW MILFORD 56, MASUK 16

(at New Milford) 285: Double forfeit; **106:** Shayn Donaldson (NM) won by forfeit; **113:** Pete Coniglio (NM) won by forfeit; **120:** Brandon Leonard (NM) pinned Luke LaRiviere 0:25; **126:** Mel Ortiz (NM) won by forfeit; **132:** Colin Lindner (NM) won by forfeit; **138:** Tyler Schultz (NM) won by forfeit; **145:** Curtis Fedorko (M) pinned Ian Brett 2:30; **152:** Jason Lobdell (M) major dec. Nick Romandi 10-0; **160:** Richard Morrell (NM) major dec. Zachary Minch 12-2; **170:** Rodolfo Mathews (M) pinned Isaac Chamreun 2:35; **182:** Kyle Fabich (NM) major dec. Carlo Zaccagnini 13-3; **195:** Julian Reza (NM) pinned Peter Dutkowski 0:24; **220:** Mike Haggerty (NM) pinned Cole Deleo 1:45. **Records:** Masuk 2-3, 1-2 SWC; New Milford 5-0, 3-0 SWC.

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