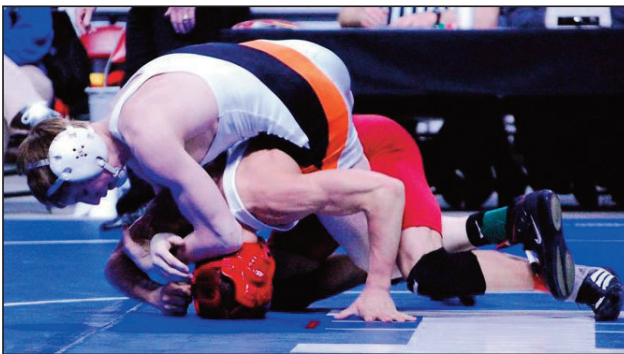
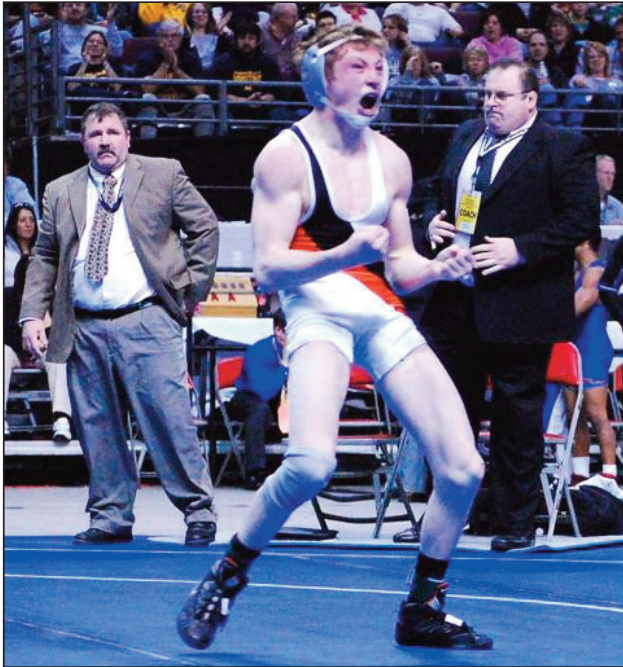




Fifield is State Champion



Photos by Jeff Moss
(top) Leslie's Brandon Fifield reacts to his victory immediately after the championship round Saturday at the Palace of Auburn Hills. (middle) Fifield competes against Matt Mata of Marlette in the championship round. (bottom) Fifield stands with coaches Todd Stern (left) and George Manson after receiving his championship medal Saturday.

By Jeff Moss
Writer

The 2010 MHSAA Individual Wrestling Finals took place Thursday, March 4 through Saturday, March 6, at the Palace of Auburn Hills. Two athletes from Leslie High School's wrestling team were there competing for Division 4 titles.

Junior Brandon Fifield entered the tournament with a 50-1 record.

After pinning Trenton Spivey of Farwell in the opening round on Thursday and then beating Andrew Scoby of Addison by an 18-4 major decision and pinning Blissfield's Chase Lewis in the first period of the semi-final round on Friday, Fifield earned the right to compete in the title round.

On Saturday, Fifield earned the 112 pound state championship when he defeated Marlette's Matt Mata by a 4-2 decision.

Fifield took a 2-0 lead after a takedown midway through the first period. With less than a minute to go in the second period, Mata earned one point on an escape, cutting Fifield's lead to 2-1.

When the match resumed from a neutral position, Fifield surprised Mata by dropping low, and lifting him on his shoulder before driving him to the mat for another two points and 4-1 lead. Mata earned another single point for an escape late in the period.

With a two point lead and only the third period separating him from the title, Fifield spent the majority of the final two minutes in the down position and fought off Mata's efforts to gain enough leverage to dictate the action. The strategy worked, as neither wrestler scored in the period, and Fifield was able to win by a 4-2 decision.

Fifield said he built upon his sixth place finish in last year's Individual Wrestling Finals 103 pound weight class. Being a state-placer "gave him the momentum

to build up and improve this year."

Fifield will compete in a variety of national events over the next year that will take him to Florida, Iowa, North Dakota and Ohio, including the 2010 FloNationals Tournament later this month.

Also competing in the Finals was 285 pound senior Heavyweight Ryan Kemplin, who also finished in sixth place in 2009. Kemplin entered his third consecutive trip to the individual tournament with a 44-5 record.

On Thursday, he pinned Matt Robinson of Newberry in 1:11 in the first round. Kemplin lost on Friday in the second round when he was pinned by Quincy's Cody McClellan during the second period of their match. The loss sent Kemplin to the consolidation bracket.

In order to have a chance to finish among the top eight places in the Division 4 Heavyweight Bracket, Kemplin had to defeat a familiar foe in Shea McGillen of New Lothrop High School.

Two weeks prior to the Individual Finals, Kemplin pinned McGillen in the second round of the Regional Tournament at New Lothrop High School.

This time around, however, Kemplin suffered an ankle injury during their Friday match. Kemplin fought to the finish, but lost by a 4-2 decision, and did not place among the top eight spots.

Devin Pommerenke, a junior from Rogers City, repeated as Division 4 Heavyweight Champion with a perfect 59-0 record.

Head Coach Todd Stern did not want to take credit for his wrestlers' success.

"They do all the work," he said. "We just blow the whistle."

Stern said he expects that by next season Fifield, a devoted weight lifter, will bulk up enough to wrestle in either the 119 or 125 pound weight class where he will vie for back-to-back state championships.



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