

Marauders Raid Regional Tourney

Advance 2 to States



Sr. Anthony Best (top) and Jr. Kyle Gray warm up for competition.

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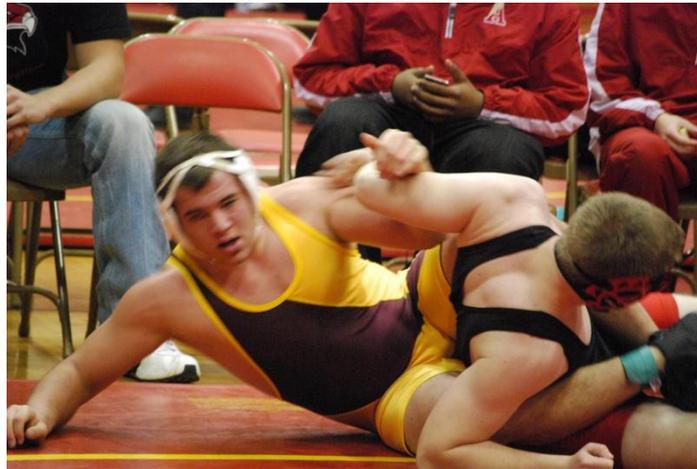
Warren Mott took two wrestlers to the MHSAA Regional Tourney this past weekend at Rochester High School and both wrestlers qualified for the State Tournament.

Senior Anthony Best and Junior Kyle Gray will wrestle for All-State honors at The Palace of Auburn Hills on March 4th, 5th and 6th. Both wrestlers advanced to the semi-finals of the Regional Tournament before succumbing to the eventual Regional Champion.

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In the opening round Best drew fellow MAC Blue wrestler, Alex Gaglio of Port Huron Northern. Best had won two of the three meetings with Gaglio during the regular season, with Best beating Gaglio most recently in the MAC Blue finals. Best picked up where he left off at League, defeating Gaglio 18-4 in the opening round. In the semi-finals Best met Roseville's Chris Nash, currently ranked 4th in the state in Division I. Best had taken Nash down and was leading the match 2-0 when he got too deep on a tight waist and was rolled to his back and pinned.

In the consolation semi-finals, Best met Royal Oak's Andrew Ferguson. The consolation semi-finals are a "win or go home" proposition where winners in the round are guaranteed a spot in the State tournament. As a result the intensity of the wrestling in this round is so high that it is commonly known as the "Blood Round."



The tension for this match was even higher because Ferguson and Best had gone to overtime in their only other match this season, a match that had taken place only four days earlier at the Team District dual meet at Warren Mott. On this occasion, though, Best was able to pull off a 3-1 win in regulation to move into the Consolation Finals and secure a spot at the Palace.

Best ultimately lost his consolation finals match to Cousino's Nate Wlash, splitting the season's victories between them at 2 a piece. A 4th Place finish at Regionals was fine with Head Coach Gary Skop, though, who noted "The name of the game at Regionals is to place and move on to the Palace. Anthony and Kyle did that and we're very happy with their performance."

Heavyweight wrestler Kyle Gray also moved on to the Palace with a Third Place finish at the Regional Tournament. Gray came into the day with something to prove. He had come on strong in his sophomore campaign, only to lose in the blood round. Determined to make it to

the Palace for his junior year season, Gray knew he would have to be on top of his game.

Although it was widely acknowledged that Gray had the ability to beat any wrestler in his bracket, it was also true that he could lose to any wrestler in his bracket. In fact he had done both - won and lost - to three of the wrestlers in the field on Saturday. But Gray came to wrestle hard, and wrestle hard he did!



Gray began the tournament with what Mott Assistant Coach Justyn Selph called "a thumping" of MAC Blue rival Jimmy Froehlich, of Fraser. Froehlich was one of the wrestlers Gray had both beaten and lost to this year. Gray took down and turned Froehlich at

will and was already ahead by a dozen points in the second period when he finally pinned Froehlich.

As a result of the win, Gray moved into the semi-finals to face the top seed, Romeo's Adam Bennett, who is currently ranked 6th in the state by Michigan Grappler. Bennett has made a killing with a "Peterson Roll," which he seems to use from any position on the mat. Gray wrestled hard against Bennett and had a 6-2 lead in the second period before allowing himself to get caught in one of Bennett's patented rolls. Although Gray lost to Bennett by a pin, he put the match behind him and moved into the "Blood Round."

In the "Blood Round" Gray faced a very large and very talented wrestler in Ted File of Brother Rice. Gray and File had wrestled the week before in the District Consolation Finals match. In that match, Gray had attacked early and kept File on his heels throughout the match, amassing a 15 point lead before pinning File in the third period.

While Gray's Regional match against File was not quite as dominant, Gray managed the only takedown of the first period and went into the

second period up by a point. In the second period, Gray turned File twice and was starting to rack up a sizeable lead when he managed to turn File the third and final time for a pin at 3:12 of the match.

Gray's opponent in the Consolation Finals was none other than his first round opponent, Fraser's Jimmy Froehlich. After taking a tough loss against Gray, Froehlich had re-grouped and beaten two formidable wrestlers in Dakota's Ryan Tilney and Grosse Pointe South's Reggie Lewis. Froehlich's overtime win over Lewis was a surprise to everyone in the gym given that Lewis was the 9th ranked heavyweight in the state in Division I. In the Consolation Finals, Gray picked up right where he left off with Froehlich, pinning the Fraser heavyweight in 2:38.

Best and Gray will take the next two weeks to prepare for the State tournament, where each Marauder will vie for a spot on the podium at the Palace. Best sports a 43-7 record going into the final competition, while Gray carries a 40-9 record to the Palace.