

## **7 Bulls place in final pre-season tournaments of year**

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BETHALTO - A total of 18 Bethalto Bulls wrestled in the final pre-season events of the 2016-2017 over the weekend of November 18-20<sup>th</sup>. This was the largest contingent the Bulls sent to the final pre-season tournaments in recent memory.

Fifteen of those kids elected to participate at Winter Nationals held at Marian Catholic High School in Chicago Heights, Illinois on November 19<sup>th</sup>. After the dust settled in Chicago Heights, six Bulls returned to Southern Illinois national place winners. The top six grapplers in each bracket are awarded the Winter Nationals snowflake medal.

Abe Wojcikiewicz, 11, and Hudson Wesley, 6, led the way at Winter Nationals finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> Place. Wojcikiewicz finished the day 4-1 earning two pins along the way in securing 2<sup>nd</sup> Place in the Novice 112 pound bracket. Wesley also recorded two pins and added a 15-0 win in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Place match in the Tot 55 pound division finishing the event 3-1.

Caine Tyus, 14, with a 3-2 record in the 98 pound Schoolboy bracket, finished 3<sup>rd</sup> while twin brother Caleb Tyus earned a 4-2 record in the 91 pound Schoolboy bracket good for 4<sup>th</sup> Place. Drake Champlain, 9, also finished 4<sup>th</sup> in the Intermediate 120 pound bracket while Dillon Dublo, 14, rounded out the Bulls place winners at Winter Nationals finishing 5<sup>th</sup> in the Schoolboy 128 pound bracket.



Zeb Katzmarek, 10, finished one match from placing in the Intermediate 75 pound division losing in the “blood round”. Other Bulls grapplers who failed to place but competed tough at Winter Nationals included Peyton Bechtold, 14, Houston Armbruster, 14, Ben Skaggs, 11, Ayden Wesley, 9, Bradley Ruckman, 9, Mason Bryant, 8, Hayes Potter, 7, and Brody Johnson, 7.

Coach Steven Bryant, who accompanied the wrestlers to Winter Nationals, said he was impressed with the overall performance of the group. “I saw some good things and I saw some things we need more work on. The good thing about pre-season tournaments, especially for kids coming back to wrestling from different sports, is they give you a good gauge of where the kids are at with some of the fundamental aspects of wrestling. This tournament gives me a good idea of what we need to go over the next several weeks of practice so that we are prepared for the regular season.”

The Bulls also sent three of its top grapplers to the Flo Kickoff Classic in Tulsa, Oklahoma on November 18-19<sup>th</sup>. Defending IKWF state champion Vinny Zerban, 14, and last’s year’s Illinois Midget Championship winner Bryce Griffin, 11, were joined in Tulsa by Bulls newcomer Shawn Minick. Minick, from O’Fallon, was a 2016 IKWF state qualifier in the Novice division and is expected to contribute to the Bulls immediately this season. All three represented the Bulls very well at the Flo Kickoff Classic.

Zerban fought back after a first round loss to finish 6-2 and earning a 4<sup>th</sup> Place finish. Griffin also left Tulsa with a winning record wrestling to a 3-2 record finally losing out in the blood round. Minick finished the event 2-2 and also just missed securing a medal.

Next up for the Bulls is the 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Bulls Wrestling Tournament held at Civic Memorial High School on Sunday, December 4<sup>th</sup>. Youth wrestling clubs interested in signing up kids for this event can contact Steven Bryant at 618-973-5168 or Jeremy Christeson at 618-779-3296. This is one the larger USAW/IKWF wrestling events in Southern Illinois.