

Alton has three first places in Granite City Tournament

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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GRANITE CITY – Alton's wrestling team came away with three individual championships and a third-place finish as the Redbirds finished fourth in the 54th Granite City William “Red” Schmitt Holiday Wrestling Tournament Tuesday night.

Phyllip DeLoach (at 145 pounds), Nicholas DeLoach (at 152) and Quiante Wagner (at 160) won titles in the prestigious tournament, while KeOntay Holmes finished third at

182 as the Redbirds racked up 476.5 points. Neosho, Mo., won the tournament with 641.5 points, with Washington, Ill., taking second with 589.5 points and Plainfield (Ill.) South finishing third with 493 points. Huntley, Ill., rounded out the top five with 388 points; the host Warriors finished 11th with 324 points.

“Getting three champions and a third is a good way to end it,” said Redbird coach Eric Roberson. “Our kids really wrestled tough and it was a great day of wrestling.”

The traditionally tough competition is what draws the Redbirds to the two-day festival. “We love it here,” Roberson said. “We come here for the competition; it's always good competition here.

The Warriors had one wrestler reach the final, DJ Millett at 126, and he dropped a 5-3 overtime decision to Merik Fulton of Triad. Still, Warrior coach George Kirgan realizes his team has some work to do before the IHSA state wrestling tournament series begins in early February.

“We did fairly well,” Kirgan said, “but we've got some work still to do, especially on our conditioning and fighting instincts. There are times you have to dig really deep to get that takedown or reversal, for instance, and we need to work on that before state begins.”

Kirgan is continuing the tradition that began in 1961 when Schmitt began the tournament to bring the best available teams to Granite City. “It's a tough competition here; you see a lot of different styles of wrestling here,” Kirgan said. “It's always a great tournament here and we're very proud of it.”

Other Alton place-winners included Connor Broyles, fifth at 120; Alejandro Lopez, sixth at 138; Cameron Cauley, eighth at 170; and Darian Pierson, sixth at 285. Granite City place-winners included Gabe Wood, seventh at 120; Josh Rozell, fifth at 132; Devon Simpson, fourth at 138; and Kyle Thompson, eighth at 160.

Wagner was voted the tournament's Most Outstanding Wrestler, while Randy Meneweather of Washington won the Most Pins award, amassing six pins in an elapsed time of 5:47.