

BREAKING OPPONENTS



ON TOP Will Hoefft '20 pins his Liberty opponent Jan. 10. "Winning feels fantastic to me," he said. "We have some really hard workouts and practices, so being able to see it pay off is awesome."

CR Jefferson	48-22
Cliff Keen Invitational	10th
Dubuque Hempstead	30-34
Council Bluffs Classic	10th
Linn-Mar	34-33
Red Owings Holiday Classic	3rd
CR Kennedy	24-49
City High	28-49
Lepic Duals	1st
Liberty	60-12
Bettendorf Midwest Shootout	11th
Dubuque Wahlert	65-9
Waterloo West	58-18
MVC	7th
Districts	3rd
State	15th



As the wrestler approaches his opponent, the crowd grows quiet and the wrestlers shake hands. This marks the beginning of a fierce battle, one in which only one wrestler will emerge victorious.

"The feeling of winning, to me is, indescribable," 170-pound Joe Dixon '19 said. "I just know there's no other feeling like it."

This team, including 145-pound Collin Leavy '20, sees a change coming.

"We have a lot of talented wrestlers," Leavy said, "but I think right now we know that we are so close to a breakthrough of being one of the most feared teams in the state."

Using past failures as his motivation, 182-pound Will Hoefft '20 said he looked to achieve a personal goal.

"Last year, I fell short of my goal of placing at State," Hoefft said. "It hurt to fall short, but it also gave me motivation to improve during the off-season. I expect to achieve and surpass that goal, and for the most part."

Other wrestlers faced setbacks.

"About a week into the start of the season, I tore the meniscus in my left knee," Leavy said. "I had arthroscopic surgery, where they basically removed most of my meniscus. Now that I'm back

wrestling, it's still a little bothersome but much better in general."

Meanwhile, 106-pound Lucas Holley '19 said it takes a lot of energy to stay ready for competition.

"The hardest part is, for sure, the amount of hard work that gets put into the sport," Holley said. "Mentally and physically, it takes a toll on the body. Staying strong and fighting through the pain is the hardest part about the sport."

To stay motivated through the season, 160-pound Mason Applegate '22 would look to the other wrestlers.

"My teammates are like my family," Applegate said. "Whenever I need help, they will rush to whatever it is. They will even help on school assignments when they know how tired you are."

Those connections strengthen through the season, Dixon said.

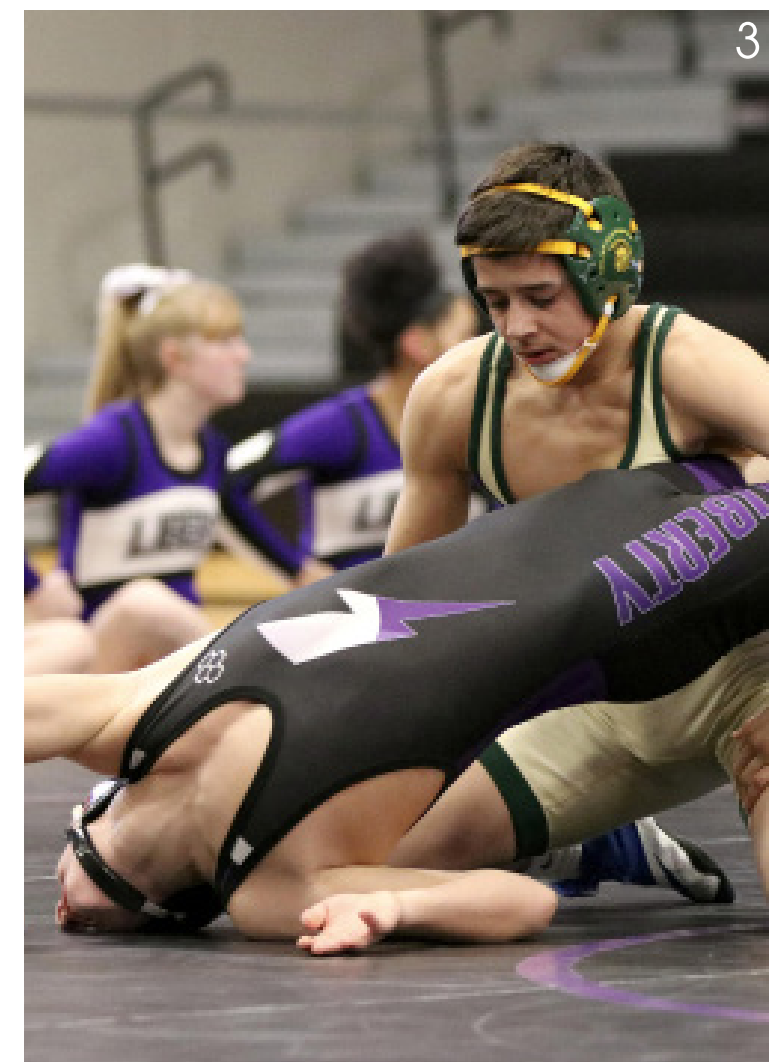
"The team has only gone up since the beginning of the season," he said. "We are all closer to each other than we were ... To me, the team is literally like another little family. We laugh together, we can get angry with each other, but in the end, we always have each other's back."

Under Coach Nate Moore, five wrestlers placed at State in Des Moines Feb. 14-16: Garvin, second; Landon Green '19 and Hoefft, sixth; Graham Gambrell '21 and Grant O'Dell '22, eighth.

—Jack Dickens



1. Parker McBride '22 tries to gain control of his opponent Jan. 10. **2.** Landon Green '19 picks up the Liberty wrestler before throwing him down. **3.** Freshman Hunter Garvin (120 pounds) tries to pin his Liberty opponent Jan. 10. **4.** Before a match, Garvin tries to "go out onto the mat and dominate." He finished second at State. **5.** Lucas Holley '19 lunges in an attempt to pin his opponent. "My teammates have helped me become the wrestler that I am."



PHOTOS BY JACK DICKENS

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