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**CLASS A STATE WRESTLING: Sturgis stands alone on top**

By Padraic Duffy, Journal staff | Monday, March 02, 2009

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WATERTOWN — The magnificent seven were enough to put the Sturgis wrestling team back on top.

The Scoopers won three straight state team titles from 2005-2007 before Rapid City Stevens came out on top in the 2008 meet. This season the Scoopers had seven semifinalists and got individual titles from Tanner Bothwell (103 pounds), Josh Keszler (119) and Seth Lange (125) to help rack up 169-1/2 points and win the team crown over Stevens, which finished second with 150 points.

"I'm not going to lie," Sturgis head coach Steve Keszler said. "It feels great. What these kids accomplished this year is incredible. To come in here with only 10 (wrestlers) and get seven into the semis says a lot about these kids."

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One of the Scoopers who didn't manage to win an individual title, but still managed to contribute mightily to the cause, was 189-pounder Jake Stygles. Stygles was the only senior at state for the Scoopers, and while he was a little disappointed in his individual finish, he was plenty pleased with his team.

"Everybody wants to come in and get that individual title," Stygles said. "But, to be honest, I think a team title means more to me than an individual title would right now."

The Scoopers were far from the only story coming out of Region 4A at the Civic Arena on Saturday as eight of the 14 individual champions feted on the day came from the western-most region in the state. Two of those individual champions — Lange and Stevens' Jarrett Jensen (152) — finished the season with perfect 50-0 records, believed to be the first time that has ever happened.

"That's just incredible," Stevens head coach Brian Moser said. "I think this weekend really goes to show that there's no doubt about which region is the best in the state."

Ads by Yahoo! Stevens' Morgan Russell repeated as the 112-pound state champ with a convincing win over Rapid City

Central's Aero Amo. Stevens sophomore Kris Klapprodt came up on the short end of a heartbreaking 2-1 overtime decision against unbeaten senior Tom Davies of Canton.

"That was just two incredible wrestlers going at it and Kris came up on the wrong end," Moser said of the 160-pound final. "Those are two guys that we're all going to be hearing a lot more from before their careers are over. They're both phenomenal wrestlers."

Two other Region 4A teams — Rapid City Central and Hot Springs — also finished in the top eight. The Cobblers were right behind third-place Huron and the Bison finished eighth with 97 points.

"It was a really good weekend for us," Central head coach Lance Pearson said. "We had a couple of slip-ups, but overall I thought we performed pretty well."

The Cobblers got just one individual champion in James Wilson at 145 pounds, but had a runner-up in Amo at 103 and a couple of third-place finishers in Tyler Jones (171) and Chapman Ham (189).

Cole Romey, a 135-pounder, won his second straight state title to lead the Bison to eighth place, topping Sturgis' Nate Wilson in overtime. The match was the fifth of the season between the two Region 4A competitors. Romey won three.

"He's such a good athlete and wrestler," Romey said of Wilson. "I knew I was going to have to try to frustrate him a bit, but I couldn't really because it's hard to frustrate good wrestlers."

Romey went out on top in his wrestling career, as he isn't planning on wrestling in college at Chadron State.

"Not unless my plans change drastically," Romey said with a smile. "This was it for me."

The Bison also got a second-place finish from freshman Brady Harkless at 145 pounds. Harkless lost to Wilson in a close match, but should be back.

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"He's already good," Wilson said of Harkless. "He's going to be really good as he gets a little older."

In addition to Bothwell, Russell, Keszler, Lange, Romey, Wilson and Jensen Douglas' Damon Lappe completed his one-loss season with a state title at 215 pounds.

Winner's Jayd Docken was another West River wrestler to pick up a state title, topping Rapid City Central's Ham 3-1 in the semifinals before beating Canton's Charles Fox 3-1 in the finals.

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