

Defenders cruise into quarters

Warrior Run 52 North Penn 15

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By Frank Dimon

TURBOTVILLE—A District 4 wrestling official joked during Warrior Run's meeting with North Penn Wednesday night that if he was a coach taking his team into "The Jungle" at Milton on Saturday morning, he'd probably have trouble sleeping on Friday night.

That's because there has never been a more balanced field than the one that fills the District 4 Class AA Team Tournament bracket this season. With nearly every team capable of putting together a championship run and with full wrestle-backs for third place, it will be a stressful day for any coach.

But Warrior Run's Wayne Smythe, the dean of District 4's coaches, surely slept soundly Wednesday night. His Defenders, the No. 5 seed, opened the tournament with a solid effort in a 52-15 first round over a pesky North Penn squad that earned the No. 12 slot.

The Panthers (15-10) handed Warrior Run a pair of forfeits and the Defenders (13-4) collected four falls and three other bonus-point wins to advance to the quarterfinal and a meeting with No. 4 Lewisburg which beat Montgomery, 42-31.

Warrior Run edged the Green Dragons, 36-33, in an early-December meeting.

"North Penn wrestled a lot better than their (wrestlers') records indicated," Smythe said. "They wrestled very soundly at 120, 126 and 132. And I thought we wrestled very soundly in the three losses at the end and that is important."

Eight bouts into the matchup of Heartland Athletic Conference II and Northern Tier League teams, Warrior Run had essentially wrapped up the match that started at 160.

Elias George opened with a six-takedown effort that powered an 18-4 major decision in the opener and the Defenders also got falls from Wes Cupp (220), Matt Kilgus (285) and Bradly Styer (113) in a run that opened up a 3-6 lead for the Defenders.

The Panthers' only winner in that stretch was Harvey Wood's first-period fall at 170.

North Penn, which lost to the Defenders by nearly 60 points in the same round last season, sent out nothing but tough wrestlers down the stretch, testing Eric Hunt and Zack LeBarron, a pair of state-ranked wrestlers by Off the Mat, and once-beaten Brian LeBarron, who should be in OTM's rankings.

Sophomore Sean Giles battled Hunt at 120, trailing just 11-8 after two periods before losing, 17-8. Kyle Wood tested Zach LeBarron at 126 before he was pinned, and Sean Kshir refused to be pinned by Brian LeBarron at 132, getting tech falled, 18-1 (5:20).

"We have some tough kids in that stretch and they are sophomores," said North Penn coach Craig Pequinot. "Giles has wrestled some very tough kids this year and his record doesn't indicate his ability. We just need to grow from this loss and move on."

The Panthers got decisions in the closing bouts from Charlie Andrews (138), Devin Remley (145), and Brad Pequinot (152).

"As coaches, we are never fully pleased with our teams," Smythe said. "I wasn't disappointed with how we wrestled tonight. But you don't ever want to get too comfortable."

And that might mean a bit of tossing and turning for Smythe on Friday night.