

Seeding meeting worse this year



with Dan Sernoffsky

LIVE AND LEARN. That seems to be a rather popular motto, but I don't think it's been observed much by wrestling coaches, and by at least one sportswriter in the area.

A year ago, I attended the seeding meeting for the Salamanca Invitational Wrestling Tournament. It was, more or less, a nightmare, or at least that's what I thought until last night, which was the seeding meeting for this year's Salamanca Invitational.

Thursday's meeting, which lasted until Friday morning, was almost too much for human mind to comprehend.

This year's tournament is a 21 team tournament, four more teams than were present last year. That means about 50 more wrestlers to worry about. And that's exactly what happened, everyone was worried about those 50 wrestlers.

The object of a seeding meeting is to place the best wrestlers at opposite ends of the brackets so that theoretically the best will meet for the championship. Of course, along the way upsets occasionally knock out the favored wrestlers, but for the most part, a well seeded tournament should lead up to the best possible combinations of wrestlers for the finals.

The trouble with seeding meetings is that the seeding is done by the coaches, and, as everyone knows, every coach thinks his wrestlers are the absolute best.

IN LAST YEAR'S SEEDING meeting, I thought I'd heard about everything. Coaches compromised and fought and fought and compromised to get the best possible seedings for the wrestlers. As it turned out, the seedings for the most part held up.

This year, it was more fight and less compromise. In the first place, the more teams meant that there were fewer head to head meetings between wrestlers and a heck of a lot of outstanding records. What it came down to in a lot of cases was how effective wrestlers were against common opponents.

Unfortunately, what happened to common opponents was that a wrestler from one team would beat someone who lost to a kid on another team who isn't half as good (in the coach's opinion) as the kid in the running for the seed. If that makes sense, the coaches were more convincing in their presentations than they appeared to be.

Thursday night was mass confusion. A lot of problems would have been solved if there weren't so many outstanding wrestlers coming into the tourney, but since they're here, it came down to arguments. And there were some beauts. Stories about kids wrestling with injuries were enough to melt a heart of stone. The coaches, however, have hearts of tempered steel, or maybe no hearts at all. Anyway, replies came out to the effect of "I don't care if your kid wrestled with two broken arms. He still lost."

SOMEONE SUGGESTED THAT IN the future, seeding be done for the Salamanca tournament by committee. As I understand it, a camel is a horse designed by committee, and if that's the way things are, a committee seeding this tournament would be lost. Knowing the temperament of the coaches, mayhem would result. They couldn't even agree on a coin toss. In one argument Thursday, the losing coach tried to get the winner to go best two out of three.

Of course, the most amazing part of the whole thing is that the coaches really aren't the ogres their wrestlers must think them, and they don't hate each other as it sounds like in the seeding meeting. It comes down to a Dr. Jekyll-Mr. Hyde sort of thing. Anyone taping the seeding meeting, then playing that tape back later would probably get the same sort of reaction we had to the White House tapes. Only having listened to the White House tapes and listened at the seeding meeting, I think the latter would be more interesting.

There was one other little item that came out at the meeting. Anyone familiar with wrestling is aware of all the dieting that wrestlers do to keep their weights down. The coaches eat enough for everyone trying to lose weight. Refreshments were available, baked goods courtesy of Mrs. Witcher, and were gone almost before all the coaches arrived. Which I can't figure. With all the chewing out going on at the meeting, no one should have been hungry.

Mistake made in wrestling edition

Through an unintentional oversight, the name of Salamanca High School director of physical education Roger Crandall was left off the listing of athletic officials of Salamanca in the Salamanca Invitational Wrestling Tournament special edition.

Also omitted from the listing was Ed Lindsay, taraugus High School wrestling coach.

The sports department of the Salamanca Republican-Press regrets the errors.

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