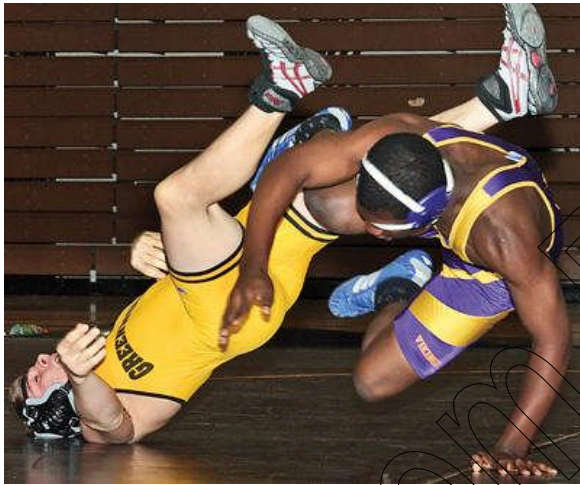


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Sports

Emerald Rallies To Bounce Greenwood Grapplers

By MATT ANDERSON/Index-Journal sports writer
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Emerald's Ian Williams, right, provided a huge boost for the Vikings (4-1) with his 15-10 win over Trey Lightsey, ranked seventh in Class AAAA. (Staff photo by T.M. James)

Eight bouts into its dual wrestling meet against Greenwood High School on Thursday, Emerald appeared headed to another decisive loss against its crosstown rival. The next six individual matches, however, proved to be decisively different.

The Vikings won the final six individual bouts, securing bonus points in five and getting big wins from Zane Newton and Ian Williams in consecutive bouts, to defeat Greenwood 35-31 in a non-region match. "This is great for this program," Emerald coach Andy Wright said. "It's been a while since they've beat Greenwood. It just says we're improving."

Trailing 31-6 and with losses in six of the first eight individual matches, Skylar Johnson started the Vikings' turnaround at 145 pounds. Wrestling up a weight class, Johnson picked up a bonus point with a 17-6 major decision victory over Dorian Butler.

Emerald's Dillon Steifle pinned Devonte Hughey at 152, setting up the dual's marquee match between the two-time state champion Newton and Greenwood's Chris Abeyta, a two-time state qualifier, at 160 pounds. Abeyta -- wrestling down from 171 pounds, where he's been wrestling most of the year -- trailed 2-0 after the first period when Newton picked up a late takedown. Newton then took off in the second period, picking up a quick six points en route to a surprisingly dominant 10-0 major decision win that brought the Vikings' deficit down to 11 points. "That's just Zane," Wright said. "He's been pumped up all day for this."

Within 11 points heading into the 171-pound bout, Williams provided a huge boost for the Vikings (4-1) with his 15-10 win over Trey Lightsey, ranked seventh in Class AAAA at 160. Williams, who was pinned when he wrestled Lightsey last February, took an early lead with a quick takedown and tied at 10 in the final minute of the third period, earned the win with a takedown and two near fall points. "I'm going in thinking to take the shot first," Williams said. "That's all. "Coach Wright and them, they just told me do my best."

Emerald clinched the win when Dillon Dorn pinned Harry Parker at 189 and Michael Hernandez earned a forfeit win at 215, the dual's final match.

While the win was big for Emerald, Greenwood (7-6) will begin its Region 1-AAAA title defense against Easley on Monday coming off a loss. With the Greenwood Invitational tournament Saturday, coach Greg Brewer said his team can try to build positives to take into its region slate. "At the end of the match, they were really excited and we haven't been that way in a while," Brewer said. "Looking at Saturday, we need to have guys working hard and fighting all the way through matches."

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