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Sports

Emerald Wrestling Knocks Off Ninety Six

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Emerald High School senior wrestler Zane Newton said his loss in the finals of Eastside's Southern Slam a few weeks ago was a good thing as far as keeping him humble, but Tuesday he needed just 21 seconds to prove he's still pretty sharp.

Newton won his bout at 160 pounds quickly, and the Vikings dominated the middle weight classes against Ninety Six to earn a 49-27 victory at Westview Middle School and remain undefeated.

Emerald led 28-24 following Skylar Johnson's 18-2 technical fall over Taylor Nunamaker at 140 pounds, but the Vikings won four of the final five bouts to take the match. Emerald 171-pounder Ian Williams clinched the victory with a 5-2 decision over the Wildcats' Jerome Pratt. "We're pretty steady in the middle weight classes and that's where our seniors are, too," Emerald coach Andy Wright said. "I was really pleased with the way it turned out."

Newton scrapped with Ninety Six's Aaron Stansell for just a few seconds before his strength and experience helped him earn a pin. "I'm kind of bummed up, so I wanted to go out there and make it quick, get back on the bench to cheer on my guys," Newton said.

Instead of being bitter over his second-place finish at Southern Slam, Newton has been using the experience of competing in a large tournament to his benefit. "I got beat in the finals, which is good for me," Newton said. "A good timely loss is good for everybody. I think I'm wrestling sharp and that kind of helped me stay on top, stay mentally focused and know that I have not arrived."

Along with Newton, three other Vikings wrestlers won by pin and three others won by forfeit. Williams led 3-2 after two periods in his match at 171 pounds before earning a late takedown in the third to close out the win. "That was a first-year wrestler for them, and Ian's been wrestling for two years," Wright said. "He's still a little bit out of his weight class -- he's only about 160 pounds -- but he's doing well."

Missing three wrestlers, two because of injuries and one because of mononucleosis, Liner and the Wildcats were left undermanned before Tuesday's match even began. "We had a kid mess his ankle up real bad today, and our 215 showed up today and he's got mono. I don't know that it mattered, Emerald did a good job," Liner said. "We've just got to find a way to get better."