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## Newton Captures 3rd Title

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LEXINGTON -- Emerald High School wrestling coach Andy Wright wondered out loud Saturday night whether it was arrogant to say Zane Newton, the Vikings' 160-pound wrestler, was capable of beating anyone in his weight class across the state. V Following Newton's third-straight Class AA-A individual state title on Saturday at Lexington High School, both Newton and Wright are warranted in exhibiting some hubris.

Newton dominated everyone in his path this weekend, winning all his semifinal match by technical fall and pinning Indian Land's Mark Gunter in the finals. On top of his victory at 160, Newton was also named the Class AA-A outstanding wrestler of the tournament. "I expected to win and that's always a big thing in a champion's mind," Newton said. "You've got to expect to get what you came for and I realized I had to finish out strong. "Everyone's talking about me being a three-peat South Carolina AA wrestler of the year and I wanted to make sure they were right."

Wright was just as confident that Newton would exit Lexington with his third straight title. "Zane is Zane," Wright said. "It might be a little cocky to say, but I don't think there's a 160-pounder in the building that can hang with him."

Newton did his part to prove that point by overpowering Gunter in the finals. Gunter wrestled tight with Newton early on but Newton went up 7-3 at the end of the first when he got a takedown and nearly pinned Gunter.

In the second, Newton continued building his lead and went into the third ahead 15-4. He was ahead 19-5 in the final period and nearing a technical fall when Newton pinned Gunter with 56 seconds remaining. "He had never seen the guy before. He was real scrappy and real strong," Wright said. "But Zane's very technical in everything he does and that's what helps him out in matches. "He's not just strong. He's strong and technical."

Newton felt good enough in the first two periods to end it then and there, but he wanted to relish his final match. "I put him on his back a few times and I didn't really want to pin him yet," Newton said. "I wanted to make my finals last a little bit longer. "I just had fun and did what I came to do."

Having developed a reputation as one of the top wrestlers at any classification in South Carolina, Newton entered the season with immense expectations on his shoulders. He made an effort not to let any of that weight affect him on Friday or Saturday. "It was just a challenge. I'm just playing it by ear," Newton said. "It all went pretty smooth and I was able to do what I wanted to do."

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