

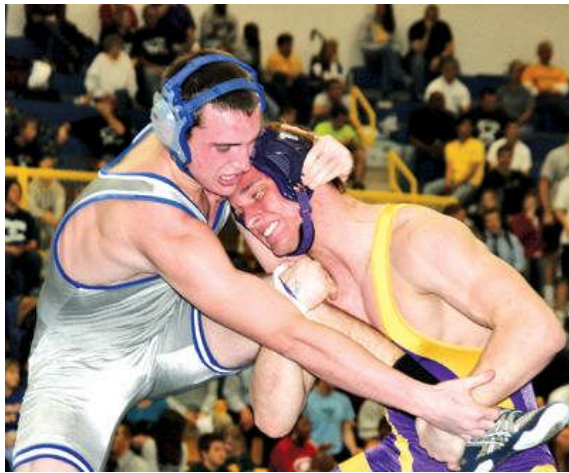
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Sports

Newton Headlines Five State Champions From The Lakelands

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Emerald's Zane Newton, right, wrestles against Indian Land's Mark Gunter on Saturday in the Class AA-A 160-pound state championship match. Newton, a senior, won the match, capturing his third state title. Newton pinned Gunter with 56 seconds left in the third period. (Staff photo by Matt Anderson.)

LEXINGTON -- Emerald High School wrestling coach Andy Wright had little doubt 160-pound wrestler Zane Newton would emerge from Saturday's Class AA-A individual state championships with a third straight title. Reaching the finals at three classifications and winning in two of those events was a welcome turn of events for the Vikings and highlighted a stellar performance by Lakelands wrestling teams at Lexington High School on Saturday.

Along with the Vikings, Abbeville, which won a Class AA team state championship just two weeks ago, placed four wrestlers in the finals and won three weight classes. Ninety Six's Brody Bertolini reached the finals at 112 pounds and Greenwood's Chris Abeyta and the Panthers' Josh Cowan earned third-place finishes.

Emerald's Skylar Johnson, at 140 pounds, joined Newton at the top of the awards podium and Abbeville's trio of 130-pounder Adam

Oaks, 145-pounder Antonio Tillman and 152-pounder James Patterson also won their respective weight classes.

At the top of the area's success though was Newton, who along with winning a state title for the third straight year also was named the Class AA-A outstanding wrestler for the tournament. Newton was just as pleased to have watched his teammates do well Saturday as he was for his own success. While Newton and Johnson both won championships, Dillon Steifle fell to Patterson at 152 pounds. "I've very proud of how far those two kids have come," Newton said. "They worked so hard this year and it was owed to them because they worked their tails off to get where they're at. "I think they watched me and they wanted a piece of it. I'm glad I could be an inspiration and a practice partner to those two."

Wright entered this season fully expecting his three seniors to compete and Saturday they made good on his confidence in their ability. "It's great. We had a great weekend and all

three of them wrestled well," Wright said. "It's a great accomplishment for all three of them. "The kids just work hard and have a great work ethic."

Newton won his title by pinning Indian Land's Mark Gunter in the third period at 160 pounds and Johnson led through his entire bout and emerged with a 10-8 win. Steifle was tied at 2 with Patterson after the first period of their match, but the Abbeville senior pulled away for a 21-10 victory.

Along with Patterson, 130-pounder Adam Oaks won his title over with three late near-fall points for a 9-6 win while Tillman defeated Indian Land's Dillon Creed by an 11-8 decision.

Cowan finished third after a surprising loss to Cheraw's Darius Little in the first round. "We had some disappointments, and I felt for them. They're seniors," Abbeville coach Anthony Martin said. "But we had three state champs, one second, one third (and) a freshman qualified. All that's awesome."

Bertolini led through the duration of his final against Crescent's Blake Whitfield, but a stalling call against him sent the match to overtime and Whitfield got a takedown to secure the win, his third over Bertolini this season. "(Bertolini) lost trying to attempt the same move each time," Ninety Six coach Chris Liner said. "They called him for stalling and that was questionable, but they called it and there's nothing we can do about it now. Brody finished fourth last year and second this year, so hopefully this will be motivation for next year."

In the Class AAAA bracket, Greenwood 160-pounder Chris Abeyta fell in the semifinals to Fort Mill's Thomas Mockridge, but rebounded to defeat Lexington's Alex Morales in the consolation finals.

Emerald

140 -- Skylar Johnson, 3-0, 1st place
152 -- Dillon Steifle, 2-1, 2nd place
160 -- Zane Newton, 2-0, 1st place

Abbeville

125 -- Josh Calkins, 0-2, DNP
130 -- Adam Oaks, 3-0, 1st place
135 -- Andrew Tillman, 2-1, second place
140 -- Josh Cowan, 3-1, third place
145 -- Antonio Tillman, 3-0, 1st place
152 -- Jonathan Patterson, 3-0, 1st place
189 -- Bryan Glace, 1-2, DNP

Greenwood

130 -- Michael Hellman, 2-2, 4th place
160 -- Chris Abeyta, 3-1, 3rd place

Ninety Six

112 -- Brody Bertolini, 2-1, 2nd place
130 -- Blake Richards, 0-2, DNP

135 -- Taylor Nunamaker, 0-2, DNP

Ware Shoals

145 -- Cody James, 1-2, DNP

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