

Timely Loss Refocuses Emerald's Newton

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In Emerald High School's wrestling team's first event of the season, senior 160-pounder Zane Newton dropped a 16-10 decision to Colin Genthert, of Wesleyan (Ga.), his first loss since he was a freshman. The rest of the season has been back to the usual for the two-time defending state champion.

Newton continued his roll and remained undefeated against in-state opponents since 2006 with a 5-0 day, a 160-pound championship and a Most Outstanding Wrestler between 145 and 285 pounds award at Saturday's Greenwood Invitational. "I feel like I wrestled pretty well," Newton said. "I just followed the gameplan coach (Andy) Wright had, and it helped, beating two pretty tough kids (Jon Sullivan) from Hillcrest and (Greenwood's) Chris Abeyta."

Ever since his loss to Genthert, Newton's season has been going exactly to plan.

After losing in the state tournament as a freshman, Newton went undefeated en route to a state championship at 145 pounds as a sophomore and was undefeated again when he won a state title at 152 last season. But coming off football season and facing last season's 152-pound Georgia state champion, Newton suffered a season-opening defeat at the hands of Genthert in December.

While the loss stopped Newton's long winning streak, Wright said the defeat was beneficial. "It lets them know they aren't invincible and lets them know that they aren't the best; they just can't go out there and say, I'm going to step on the mat and I'm going to win," Wright said. "I don't expect Zane to have that kind of attitude because that's not who he is, but it's good. It brings you back down to reality."

Newton, in the midst of another individual winning streak since the defeat, agreed with his coach. "I thought that helped out a lot," Newton said. "I think it was a learning experience and let me know I need to keep working and I'm beatable. A timely loss is always good."

The senior's most recent win came in Saturday's 160-pound championship bout against Abeyta. Following a late first-period takedown and an Abeyta escape point, Newton led 2-1 heading into the second period. Newton started the second period down, registered a quick reversal and rode Abeyta out to take a 4-1 lead into the third.

Newton then sealed the championship emphatically with a pair of takedowns to secure an 8-2 decision over Abeyta, the fifth-ranked 171-pounder in Class AAAA. The win was Newton's second this week over Abeyta, coming on the heels of a 10-0 win over the Greenwood senior in a dual meet on Thursday. "Chris is a really good wrestler," Newton said. "He wrestled a good match, and it was a little intimidating, but I just kept moving around and

that worked out for me." By staying in motion, Newton secured another individual accolade with his 5-0 run through the tournament and continued distancing himself from his December defeat. "He wrestled like a state champion (Saturday)," Wright said. "There ain't nothing to it. It's just constant motion for him."

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