

TO PREPARE FOR REGIONALS, Coach Joe Dreher showed his wrestlers moves during practice last week. At the meet in Ellis, Coach Dreher and Assistant Coach Tige Stone sat on the side of the mats watching and giving advice.



CHEERING ON THE WRESTLERS, the Red Devil girls clapped their hands and cheered to get the crowd into the match.

Wrestlers sweat on way to regionals

By **KIMBERLY BRANDT**

The room was hot and muggy. Fourteen boys wore layers of clothing and the sweat rolled off their faces as each one tried to pin his opponent to the red mats.

Every 30 seconds, Assistant Coach Tige Stone blew the metal whistle signaling the match was over and the boys switched places on the mats, sometimes starting in a standing position and other times on the floor.

For almost an hour, the Red Devil Wrestlers repeated these actions, learning and perfecting moves taught to them by Coach Joe Dreher. Although he said "practice is nothing like true competition," the boys were serious, trying to get everything right before heading to regional tournament in Ellis on Friday and Saturday.

Coach Dreher said the wrestlers had two weeks off from competition and last Wednesday, he was trying to help them get their minds and bodies ready for the regional contest.

"We were mainly doing live wrestling," he said, "trying to brush up on technique."

The boys were working hard, with hip-hop music playing in the background loud enough to hear at the other end of the room, and often you could see them resting with their hands on their knees, bent over to get a breath. But Coach Dreher said this

wasn't their hardest practice of the week. Normally, he said, the wrestlers start with the toughest practice on Monday and then wind down from there. He said last week was no different, even though they were preparing for the regional tournament.

Practice wasn't the only way that the boys prepared. Friday morning before they left, they got a morale boost from the senior moms.

Breakfast was made for them and served at the United Methodist Church at 7:30 a.m. Carolyn Miller, mother to wrestler Bryan Miller, said that each mom brought in muffins, fruit, juice or a casserole for the 30-minute event.

"It is tradition to cook for them before they leave for regionals," she said. "Bryan has been wrestling for four years now and we have always done breakfast."

The meal is a reward for the boys, especially those who have had to sweat and diet to "make weight" all week. After the wrestlers weigh in at the school, she said, they head over to the church for the home-cooked meal.

"It unites them as a team and gets them boosted and ready to go," she said.

During the breakfast, Gary Richards, who wrestled in high school and has children who wrestled, gave a 10-minute motivational speech to help get the Red Devils excited about the

weekend.

Each boy left with a statue in hand. On the plaque on the bottom, each wrestler's name was etched in it with their weight and Regionals 2001.

"Usually we try to do something nice to give to them," said Mrs. Miller, "a keepsake for them."

Later that morning, at 10:45 a.m., the boys piled into two Suburban and began wrestling that afternoon.

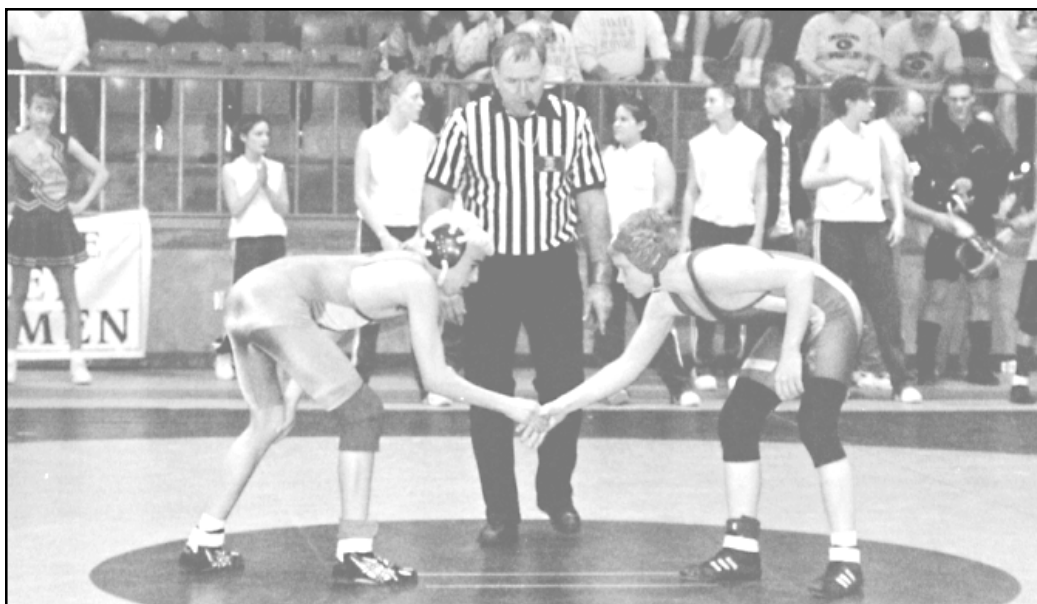
Coach Dreher said before they left that the boys would have to stay on offense and not be hesitant during the meet.

"They all have a chance and are in the bracket," he said. "If they don't place, then the year is over. You never know what will happen at this regional. It is tough and depends on who wrestles best."

Coach Dreher said he was happy to have some freshmen going to state. He said for the big weekend, the wrestlers needed to stay focused.

He said he will hold normal practices and do the normal routine this week. During state competition, he said, they'll have to focus on take-downs and staying busy during a match.

Wrestlers who will move on to state this weekend are Kenyon Badsky, Matt Coleman, Chance Harman, Bryan Miller, Brent Olson and Stean Olson.



BEFORE HIS MATCH STARTED, wrestler Brent Olson shook hands with his opponent in Ellis this weekend. Brent was one of the six Oberlin boys to qualify for state competition.

**Herald photos
by Renee Harman
and Kimberly Brandt**



BEFORE THE WRESTLERS LEFT FOR ELLIS, breakfast was prepared by the senior moms. Wrestlers met at the United Methodist Church after weighing in to eat muffins, casseroles, fruit and juice and get little souvenir trophies.