

Coach wants BHS wrestlers to fire up

Hollman looks for more self-starters going into big weekend.

BY DAVE PAYNE
SPECIAL TO BLUFFTON TODAY

If there is one thing that drives fiery Bluffton High wrestling coach John Hollman through the mat, it's when his wrestlers head into a match uninspired.

It happened in Bluffton's first of two lopsided home wins Wednesday against Stahl and Bamberg-Ehrhardt. And it happened last December, when the team competed at the Lugoff-Elgin Invitational.

Hollman will be hoping for more urgent self-motivation out of his wrestlers from here on out, starting today and Saturday at the Lugoff-Elgin Invitational.

"We're going to be facing some good Class 3-A teams," Hollman said after the Bobcats began slowly en route to a 66-15 win over undermanned Stahl in their Region 7 3-A opener, followed by a much better performance during a 57-16 victory over 1-A power Bamberg-Ehrhardt.

"The tournament is going to be another of several battles we'll be facing in preparation for the season-ending war (the Lowcountry, region and state finals).

"It hopefully is going to be another step in attempting to solidify our lineup from top to bottom," Hollman said. "It's important that our backup and fill-in guys continue to improve. It's going to take more than our top three or four guys doing well to make us successful as a team."

One way to avoid a tongue-lashing from their coach this weekend is for the Bobcats to be more mentally prepared for Lugoff-Elgin than he felt they were last year.

Despite a fifth-place finish in the 28-team tournament and five wrestlers earning medals, including second- and fourth-place finishers Chris Nicolosi and Nick Shappee, respectively, Hollman said after the tournament, "We



Photos by Kim Rowland/Bluffton Today

Bobcats wrestler Nick Shappee, top, glances up at Coach John Hollman for instruction during his winning match against Beaufort High School on Thursday.

had some great individual performances, with some guys taking big steps forward, but we also had guys take big steps back at the top and bottom of our lineup.

"I pride myself on constantly moving forward as a team, and I can't say we did that this weekend. A lot of guys were spinning wheels in the mud and some even went backward."

Hollman was just as upset after Wednesday's match against Stahl, which yielded 30 points via forfeits because Stahl didn't have enough wrestlers to fill five of the 14 weight classes. Still, the Bobcats trailed 9-6 after the first three matches against a team that isn't exactly a juggernaut.

"We wrestled to their level, and that's not going to cut it," Hollman said. "That's the ultimate downfall in any sport. You should wrestle up to your competition, not down."

"A simple inspirational talk between matches in the locker room took care of that. We picked it up in the second match against a good Bamberg-Ehrhardt team. We had a dogfight against them last year, and they were a good test this time. That's why we invited



Tyler Rosenlieb, top, beats Bamberg-Ehrhardt's David McCully with a pin Wednesday.

them back. We'll be going to their place next year."

Hollman said he hopes to avoid having to continue giving motivational speeches to his wrestlers.

"The kids have to learn that they need to be ready to motivate themselves," the coach said. "This is a team sport, but it's also an individual sport with you out there against an opponent that wants to defeat you."

"You shouldn't need anyone else to inspire you in what is a hand-to-hand combat sport. It's about survival."

One Bobcat who is as self-motivated as they come is junior 135-pounder Ryan Koons, who improved to 10-2 with a pin in 35 seconds against Stahl's Isaac Jackson and an impressive 140-pound 16-8 major-decision defeat of B-E's Laquin Nimmons, who entered the match with a 9-1 record.

Koons, who missed the 2005 Lugoff-Elgin Invitational with a fractured hand, was moved up from 135 to 140 by Hollman after B-E coach Derek Ayers did the same with Nimmons.

"(Ayers) bumped his big guy up

in an attempt to avoid Ryan," Hollman said. "So that's what we did with Ryan. We had the confidence in him doing the job, and he did."

Koons, who starred for the Bobcats in football, said Nimmons was one of his toughest opponents to date.

"(Nimmons) beat the same Stahl kid I did without any problem, so I didn't learn much from watching that match," Koons said. "All I did was go out and wrestle my match, not allowing him to take me out of my element. He took advantage of some stuff he tried on me, things I have to work on preventing in the future."

"I didn't let him get into my head. That's something I can't allow to happen, allowing my emotions to carry me away."

Statistically, it was an overall solid Wednesday for the Bobcats, who finished with 14 pins. It took junior Ricky Peavey (140, 145) a combined 46 seconds to record two pins, and sophomore Jason Rainboth (189, 171) also notched a pair of pins in 55 and 54 seconds.

Against B-E, the Bobcats built a 23-6 lead behind pins by junior Troy Dolin (215), freshman John Porst (103) and Nicolosi (119), and a 15-0 technical fall triumph by Austin Tosky (125).

After a pin by B-Town senior Trey Jarosz (135) and Koons' major decision, the Bobcats pulled away with successive pins by Peavey, Shappee (152), freshman Tyler Rosenlieb (160) and Rainboth before B-E earned its final six points with a pin.

"I was happy with the way Troy bounced back (after a loss against Stahl) and the way Porst scrapped and fought to get a big win for us," Hollman said. "Trey did a great job getting a pin filling in for Ryan at 135."

B-E (3-6) at least got one win in Bluffton on Wednesday with a 54-24 win over Stahl.

Bluffton is scheduled to compete in two more tournaments after this weekend (the Clover Christmas Duals Dec. 29-30 and the Lowcountry Invitational Jan. 5-6 at Beaufort) before returning home for nonregion dual matches Jan. 8 against Ridgeview and Benedictine.