

Kids feel thrill, agony of matches

By Doug Stephens
The Goodland Daily News

The young wrestler lost his match. He shook his opponent's hand, then the opposing coach's, then had to face his own coach.

Not just his coach, but the head of the wrestling club, the man in charge of the tournament.

"You did good out there," the coach said.

The boy, just 6, raised his eyes from the floor, tears forming, but he didn't allow them to drop. He didn't say anything for a few seconds, then he stepped forward and wrapped his arms around the coach's waist.

"Thanks, Dad," Brook Bahe said. Terry Bahe embraced his son, then pulled him away from the mat.

"So what do you think happened out there?" he asked as they walked away, his arm wrapped around his son's shoulder.

It was a scene repeated all day Saturday at the Kansas Kids district wrestling tournament. An estimated 600-650 kids swarmed into Max Jones Fieldhouse, all trying to win a berth at the state tournament in Topeka on Friday and Saturday.

The wrestlers ranged from 43-pound 6-year-olds to 215-pound 16-year-olds. From Goodland, 42 wrestlers competed, and 28 will go on to Topeka.

Mats covered the gym floor from end to end, with up to 10 matches going at a time. There wasn't enough room for each match to be kept separate, and it was not unusual for two sets of wrestlers to struggle within a few feet of each other, or even to collide.

The fieldhouse was hot and humid. Spectators had a hard time finding a seat, and with so many bodies crowded around, it was hard for wrestlers and coaches to get where they were going.

In every direction, there were boys with their heads buried in their fathers' chests, faces red and streaked with



Jazzmin Weis of Goodland beat a Colby wrestler in the 49-pound/6-and-under division Saturday at Max Jones Fieldhouse. She was the only girl in the tournament. Photo by Doug Stephens/The Goodland Daily News

tears. Winners weren't as easy to spot. They didn't jump around or do victory dances. They tended to savor the moment. They might hug their coach, then walk a short distance away and collapse against a wall. Or they might

walk around the gym in a daze, faces red from exertion.

The noise was tremendous. Spectators cheered, little kids cried out and pretended to be like their big brothers on the mats, and coaches yelled direc-

tions from their corners. "Move out of there fast," a Scott City coach yelled in a consolation semi-final round.

The wrestler looked at his coach as his Oberlin opponent grabbed him by

the leg and flipped him over. "Pay attention to what he's doing," the coach said, then laughed at himself. "Maybe I ought to keep quiet," he muttered.

Not every coach was as understanding.

"You deserved to lose," a coach from Liberal yelled at his 12-year old wrestler. "You went in there and did everything I told you not to."

A 8-year-old boy lost his match and shook the opposing coaches' hands, but when he went to shake his own coach's hand, the man turned and walked away.

Several kids were hurt, but none seriously, said Terry Bahe. One wrestler applied an illegal choke hold to his opponent, causing him to turn blue. He forfeited his match.

The injured 14-year-old wrestler stood up and started walking to his coach in the corner, but collapsed on the way. He was examined by a doctor, who said he was fine, just a little bit dazed.

Despite the intense competition, Brook Bahe and Cy Paxton said they enjoy wrestling tournaments. Paxton eliminated Bahe from the competition, but they ate lunch with their friend Taylen Smith and joked with each other like any other pair of 6-year olds.

"Wrestling is fun," Paxton said. "I beat Brook, knocked him out of the tournament, but that's OK. We're still friends."

"It would be stupid to be mad at him because he beat me," Bahe said. "He just did better than me."

He thought for a moment, then set his face firm and added, "but it won't happen again."

Wildcats drop game to Monarchs

MILWAUKEE (AP) — Old Dominion's pressure was too much for Kansas State's youthful inexperience.

Lucienne Berthieu scored 30 points and the Lady Monarchs, angered by their seventh seed, beat Kansas State 88-62 in a Midwest Regional semifinal game Saturday.

Old Dominion will play Connecticut on Monday in the regional final, with the winner advancing to the Final Four.

"We're in a position now to ruin parties and that's a great place to be," Old Dominion coach Wendy Larry said. "When you're in that position, you can be more relaxed."

Berthieu shot 13-for-18 from the field, and the three-time Colonial Athletic Association player of the year was a dominating presence on the low post, drawing as many as three defenders.

"She got the best of me pretty much all the game," Kansas State center Nicole Ohlde said.

Old Dominion (28-5) shot 66 percent, including an 8-for-8 performance by Monique Coker, who finished with 16.

The Lady Monarchs played stingy defense early, limiting Ohlde to four first-half points. She finished with 23.

The Wildcats' other two top scorers also were held in check.

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Royals' broadcaster slows down

By Doug Tucker
AP Sports Writer

HAINES CITY, Fla. (AP) — The voice of the Kansas City Royals will be growing a little fainter again this year.

Denny Matthews will sit out three or four road trips, continuing the gradual withdrawal of the popular radio play-by-play broadcaster who called the Royals' very first game in 1969.

"It seems like a good way just to kind of cut back slowly," he said.

Until he sat out three road trips last year, Matthews had missed only about 15 games in the Royals' first 32 seasons. Next to George Brett, Denny Matthews is probably more closely associated with the Royals in the minds of fans than anyone else.

He has broadcast exclusively for the Royals his entire career, one of the few men in the history of the game to call plays for his team in five different decades.

Now he is easing into retirement, cutting back on the travel, the only part

of his job that is no longer appealing. "Last year it was great," he said. "It revitalized me. It recharged the battery. Instead of grinding you down, you had something to get away from it for a few days and come back strong."

Fred White, who was Matthews' sidekick on the Royals' broadcasts for more than 20 years until he was released in 1998, will again fill in for Matthews. He will pair with Ryan Lefebvre, who replaced him.

"Fred loves doing it and the fans certainly like to hear him," Matthews said. "It works out for everybody."

If not for the travel, Matthews would still be seeing every game every season.

"Sitting down and doing a game is not a problem," he said. "That's fun. I could do every home game. Driving to the park at 4 o'clock, doing a game, then getting home around 11 o'clock — piece of cake. But it's the extraneous travel and all that bunk that grinds you up.

"Plus, when you're doing every game, you can never get away. There's a game on you every night for six months. No escape. Then you mix in the travel half the time and that's really grinding."

At 59, the thousands of games and innings he has broadcast are starting to feel a bit grinding, too.

As for what happens after this season, who knows? His thinking now is that he may cut back a little more.

"When you do 162 games plus 15 or so exhibitions, that's close to 180 games a year," he said. "That's a lot of foul balls, a lot of full counts. I did almost every game for 32 years. We figured out once that I had made something like 440 road trips in a row."

While missing the games last year, Matthews did not feel like a fish out of water. In fact, he didn't even listen much to the radio on those days.

"I'd hear bits and pieces of the broadcasts, but I was doing stuff," he said.

Knoblauch back at camp

HAINES CITY, Fla. (AP) — Outfielder Chuck Knoblauch returned to Kansas City's spring training camp Sunday after missing a week because of the death of his father.

Knoblauch, a former New York Yankee signed last winter as a free agent, did not play Sunday in the Royals' 8-4 loss to Tampa Bay. Manager Tony Muser said he would be back in the lineup against Atlanta on Monday.

"I expect him to be a little rusty," said Muser. "When you lose a father, it's an emotional time."

Muser said he was not concerned about Knoblauch's being ready for opening day on April 1.

The Royals are counting heavily on Knoblauch as a left fielder and leadoff hitter.

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