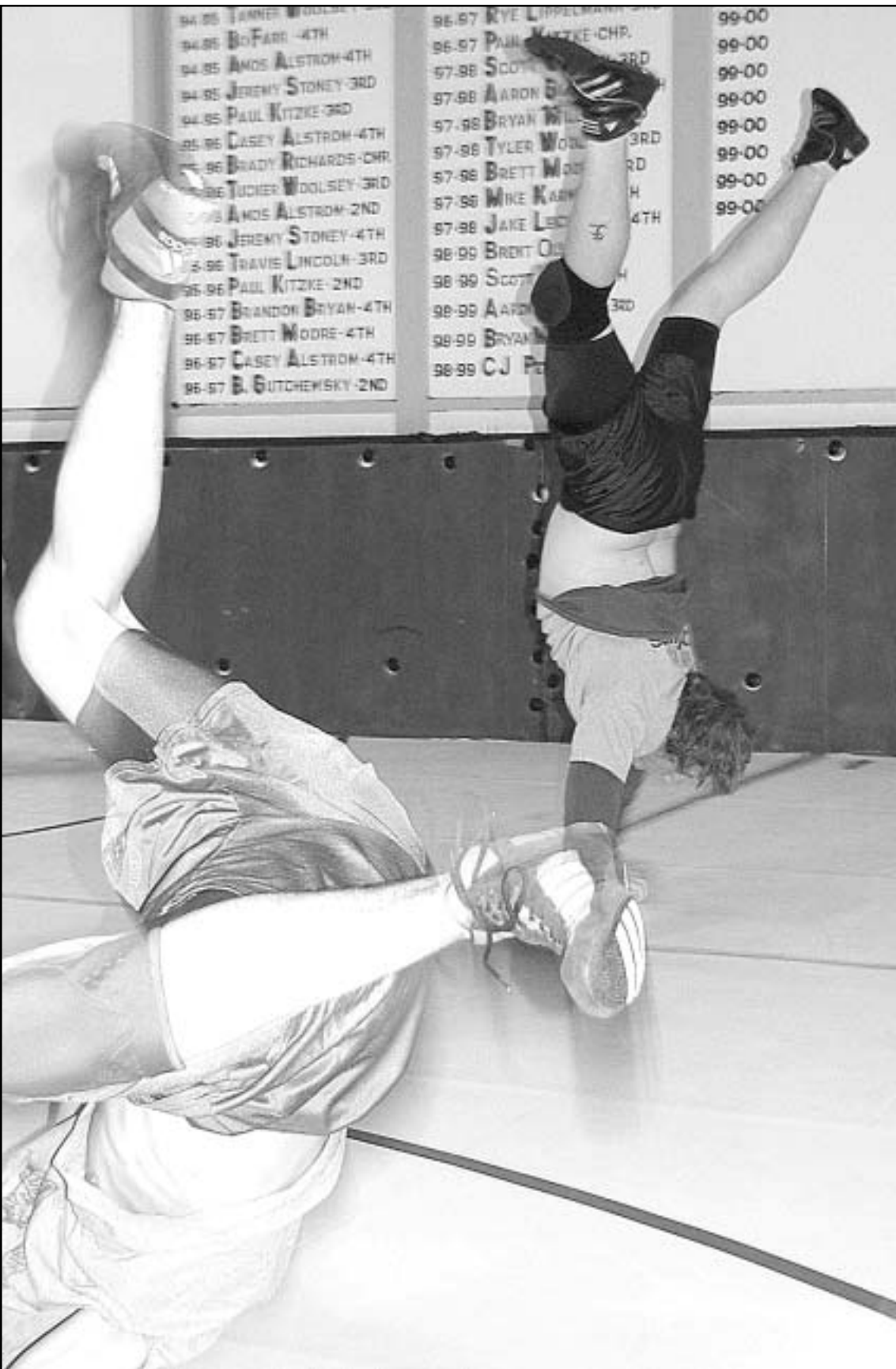


AT PRACTICE THURSDAY, two boys locked legs while they wrestled during live wrestling time. The Red Devils practice in the room above the high school gym after school.



ON HIS HANDS, Jake Padgett (above) made it from one side of the mats to the other at wrestling practice. Scott Miller and Denton Bailey (right) lock hands in practice on Thursday.

Wrestlers prepare for regional, state competitions

Rock music was playing as the young men started their warm-up routines.

Each wrestler took several passes on the mats stretched out in the wrestling room above the gym at Decatur Community High School, jogging, shuffling side to side, front somersaults, back somersaults and even walking on their hands.

Each man stretched out on the mats before they got into live practice with one of their team members.

It was two days before the regional meet in WaKeeney, and the

Red Devils were getting ready.

Coach Joe Dreher said they started the season in December with 25 wrestlers. Since then, he said, a few guys have dropped out because of injuries.

That didn't stop the team from qualifying 14 wrestlers for the regional tournament on Saturday and eight for state this coming weekend.

Coach Dreher said the team started the season working on technique. Then in late January, the focus changed to a lot of live wrestling. Since several wrestlers have been

injured this year, he said, they have cut down the live wrestling and done more conditioning in practices than in the past.

With state this coming weekend, said Coach Dreher, they will try to keep practices the same.

He said he wants the wrestlers to stay in their normal routine and keep improving.

The team, he said, is one of the top 16 in the state and qualified from one of the toughest regionals. That says a lot for these guys, he said, looking around the room.

