

STRENGTH AND ENDURANCE were tested at Sunday's novice wrestling tournament at Decatur Community High School, where Conner Holliday worked a pin move on Levi Nichols. The event raised about \$2,500 for the Oberlin Kids' Wrestling Club.

Young wrestlers hit the mats

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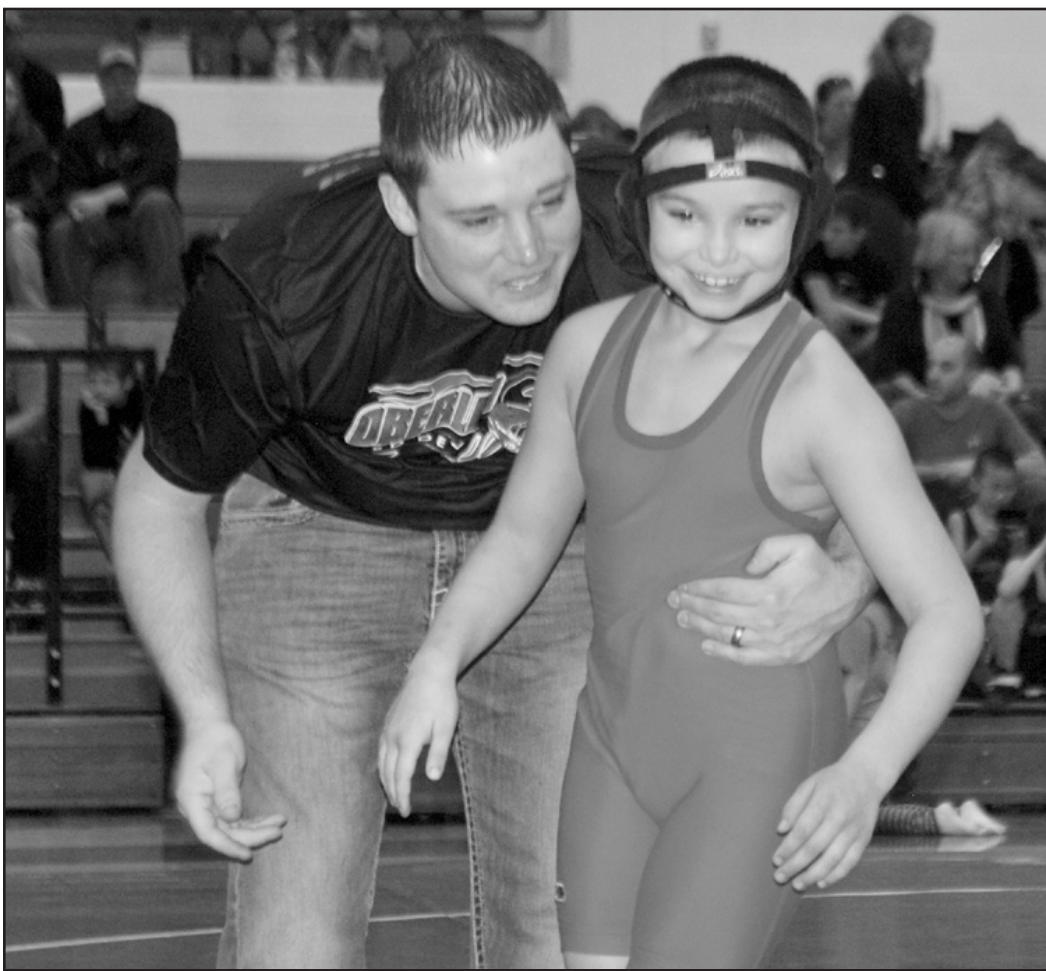
When was the last time you saw two wrestlers locked in each others' grip, with the crowd roaring around them, fall into a fit of giggles?
 That wasn't the case every match, but the atmosphere of Sunday's novice kids' wrestling tournament at Decatur Community High School was just as jovial as it was competitive.
 "It was wonderful," said organizer Shane Bird, who along with high school Principal Ben Jimenez helped to organize the event. "Everything went smooth. We had about

100 kids wrestle, and all beginners. It really just gives them some mat time and lets them learn how things work, so you don't end up throwing them to the wolves later."
 The event wasn't just about learning the sport, however. It was also a fund raiser for the Oberlin Kids' Wrestling Club.
 "We made good money for the club," Mr. Bird said. "About \$2,500 – half was entry fees and the rest were concessions, and 80 percent of the concessions were donated, mostly from parents and people in the community."
 "We started doing it last year," said Mr. Jimenez. "A novice tournament is for first-

and second-year wrestlers only.... We have a lot of new kids every year, so it's good for them because they can go and have some success."
 "We put it all together; we all have certain jobs, and then we always try to plan it after the high school tournament so the set up is easier. It usually works out pretty good. Last year, we took a big portion (of the money raised) for a new wrestling mat for the high school."
 Mr. Bird said that this year, the event raised about \$2,500. The only expenses for the club, he said, are the uniforms and some state fees, and this year they're think-

ing about maybe getting the kids some sweatshirts.
 "The majority of our (wrestlers) were the younger groups," said Mr. Jimenez of the match. "The kids are in groups of six, eight, 10 and 12 years of age and under. So kids anywhere from 5 to 12 can wrestle, and then there are different weight classes in every weight group, too."
 "I had about 26 kids under 40 pounds," said Mr. Bird. "It was just so fun to watch. And that's a pretty small tournament – a lot of the open ones there's 250 to 400 kids."
 "I'm the president of the wrestling club; I took over for Kevin Brown. And I've been

doing it for three or four years now. I enjoy it, and I like to do it right. Every little town around here has a little club like this you know – it's pretty big in Kansas. It takes a lot of people to put one of these on, and we're very thankful to all of the volunteers and kids who refereed."
 But even though the now-annual event is a challenge, Mr. Bird said if anything, he'd like to see it grow.
 "I hope it gets bigger," he said. "We hope to have an open tournament, instead of just a novice one ... an actual open tournament so anybody could enter."



IT WAS AN EXCITING day for all the kids who participated, all 5 to 12 years old. Jacob Schellhamer (left) got a hug from Coach Shane Bird after winning his match. Principal Ben Jimenez, Dayton Dreher and Cody Wurm (from left, above) worked the scoring table to keep track of simultaneous matches on three mats. Sage Bryan (below) was full of moves he put over on his Atwood opponent, as was Ryan Ketterl (below left), who won his match.

– Herald photos by Stephanie DeCamp and Abby Hissong

