

# Varsity wrestling wins first in NCHSAA state championship

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The two wrestlers get in a low position and the ref places himself in between them. One handshake, then another and one more between the anxious opponents for the match to begin. Spectators battle with the man on the mat until the winner is named.

The varsity boys' wrestling team, coached by Ron Bare, won their first 4A NCHSAA Dual State Championship against Wilmington Laney High School at the Guilford Coliseum on Saturday, Feb. 2. At a dual championship, two teams are crowned champions. The Vikings had an amazing comeback for a final score of 33-27 after being down 21-12.

"The team could improve on intensity," senior Shane Chavis said. "A lot of times when it wasn't a big match we would get really quiet."

Before, the team practiced hard every day in the gym and prepared for Wilmington Laney.

"Coach did as much research on them as they (did on us), so we worked on countering what they do," senior Chance Abel said.

The Vikings trailed the opponent until senior Shane Chavis's win turned the momentum.

"Being that we were down, I knew I had to go out there and get the party started for my boys," Chavis said.

The Vikings were still behind until senior Chris Garrison snatched a valuable win in his 195-pound weight class. He tied the teams 21-21.

"We all started to finally get up and get loud," Garrison said.

Senior Jacob Hardy followed in the 220-pound weight class for another win to put the Vikings in the lead, 27-21. Then, junior Stephen Vega, of the 285-pound weight class, had an incredible win over an opponent who outweighed him by over 30 pounds.

"(Vega) wasn't supposed to win that, and that really sealed the deal," Garrison said.

After Abel's loss, the score was now 30-27.

"Although I did lose my match, I don't think the team was too uptight because we had a pretty good lead before," Abel said.

The very last match was to determine the winner. Sophomore

Riley Edwards stepped up to the mat and was able to outlast his opponent for the 33-27 win.

"My favorite part of the match was when we sent (Edwards) out for the last match," Chavis said "I knew we had won the match because I trust him, and we rely on him in big matches."

The crowd at the coliseum filled the fieldhouse. The parents, students and staff members were on constant edge as the Vikings fought hard on the mat.

"It was almost like a home match to us because of how close to home the coliseum is," Chavis said.

Winning matches were Chavis, senior Finn Queen, senior Nick Nefe, senior Ian Adams, Garrison, Hardy, Vega and Edwards.

Individual awards include the NCHSAA State Championship Sportsmanship award to Vega, and Edwards was named the NCHSAA 4A State Championship Most Valuable Player.

The boys made history, not only for Northwest, but for all of Guilford County Schools; they were the first 4A school in the county to win a Wrestling State Championship.

"To be a champion," Abel said, "it feels crazy because it's like no one can take that away from me."

Garrison also won his second individual state championship on Feb. 16. At the same event, senior Finn Queen won fifth in the 145-pound weight class, Edwards won fourth in the 113 and James Joplin won fourth in the 120.



Photos by Megan Harkey

Senior Chris Garrison (top-mid right) puts his opponent in a head lock on the mat. He also won his individual State Championship on Feb. 16. Senior Shane Chavis (top lower right) gets on top of his opponent in a pin attempt. His win created a momentum shift in the match in the Viking's favor. The Viking fan section (bottom left) watches in suspense as the Vikings throw down on the mat. They were extremely loud and encouraging at the match and chanted the wrestler's names. The Vikings huddle up and celebrate their victory (bottom center) with Garrison in the middle. They beat Wilmington Laney high school for the 4A Dual State Championship on Feb. 2, 2019. Sophomore Riley Edwards (top right) turns his opponent upside down onto his head. He was the MVP of the match. Head coach Ron Bare (top left) goes to shake the Wilmington Laney coach's hand. This was his first 4A Dual State Championship win.

