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Photo by Tracy Dreslinski
 Utica Ford II senior heavyweight Vince Vultaggio grapples with Grosse Pointe North senior Josh Franklin.

Happy ending

Ford II senior grapplers finish team career at home

By Brad D. Bates
 C & G Sports Writer

STERLING HEIGHTS — Falcons wrestling coach Gary Fettig didn't have much to complain about Feb. 25 at Ford II.

His team rounded out its dual-meet season at 14-16, but once the dust settled following the Falcons' 65-10 loss to Roseville High in the Division 1 regional final, Fettig felt good about his team's effort.

"We won our district, and we're happy with that," Fettig said. "We knew we had our work cut out tonight with Chippewa Valley or Roseville, but the kids showed up, wrestled and gave them the best they got."

The Falcons topped Grosse Pointe North 37-23 in the regional semifinal before facing Roseville, which beat Clinton Township Chippewa Valley 34-21 in their semifinal.

"We have a good bunch of guys," Fettig said. "They came together and got into a regional final, and I feel real good about that."

It was important for the Falcons to wrestle hard and make sure that if teams were going to compete for a regional title in their gym, they were going to be one of them.

"We were hosting the region, and we would have felt pretty bad setting up the gym for somebody else," Fettig said. "It was nice to get out here after winning the district and get to the regional final in our own gym."

The Falcons reached the regional round by topping Utica Stevenson 34-31 Feb. 17 at Ford II. Senior 140-pounder Andrew Harris' pin in the closing seconds of the final match clinched the victory.

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“Traditionally, we don’t have a record like that, but they stepped up and jelled together,” Fettig said of the Falcons’ ability to shrug off their first sub-.500 regular season during his tenure.

“When districts start, records are 0-0, and we had a couple seniors step up that night. Andrew Harris wrestled a big match, pinning a guy who had beat him before.”

Senior Mike Risk, who won his 189-pound match 10-1, and senior heavyweight Vince Vultaggio earned wins against the Panthers, and for the veterans, it was important to end their team season together at home.

“It was great, because I have all my best friends here tonight, and it’s something I will never forget,” said senior 160-pounder Steve Moore, who along with Risk and Vultaggio qualified for the individual regional meet at Birmingham Groves, after press time. “It was a team effort, and guys never gave up.”

While the Falcons say goodbye to seniors Risk, Vultaggio, Harris, Moore, 145-pounder Harvey Lee and 171-pounder Dan L’Homme, Fettig hopes the returning grapplers take away the feeling of losing their final match as they commit to 2009-10.

“They lost tonight, and until we start again in November, this is the feeling they’re going to have to live with until then,” Fettig said. “They need to work with it, so we get better next year.”

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