

By Randy Whalen

Brayden Thompson continues to show that he could very well be the top wrestler, not only in the state but in the nation.

The rest of the Lockport Township boys wrestling team continues to step up as guys have filled in where needed.

It all added up to a successful final weekend before Christmas for the Porters. They traveled to the prestigious Dvorak Tournament on Saturday, Dec. 17, and Sunday, Dec. 18. It was the 34th year for the tourney, which is held at Halem High School in Machesney Park.

There Lockport had five wrestlers finish in the Top 8, including Thompson winning the 182-pound title. That helped the Porters to a third-place finish overall.

St. Charles East (195 points) won it. Marist (185) was second and Lockport (153.5) placed third. Cleveland Tennessee (142.5), Amery, Wisconsin (137), and Hersey (133) rounded out the top six of the 39 teams that were there.

Also placing for the Porters at the Dvorak was freshman Justin Wardlow, fourth at 120 pounds, senior Aidan Nolting, fifth at 195 pounds, sophomore Liam Zimmerman, seventh at 126 pounds, and senior Logan Kaminski, eighth at 145 pounds.

Thompson (21-0) had a trio of pins at the tourney, including one of sophomore Lucas Szymborski (18-1) from Cleveland, in the title match.

"He's put it on the line at three different weight classes," Lockport coach Jameson Oster said of Thompson. "He won the Ironman again (at 195 pounds). "I think he's the best wrestler in the country."

Indeed Thompson, who has signed with Oklahoma State University, is a finalist for the Junior Hodge Trophy. That is a prestigious award that goes to the top high school wrestler in the nation.

While Thompson, who was undefeated (45-0) last season in winning the Class 3A individual title at 170 pounds, has wrestled many weights, including 190 at Ironman, he has settled on one for later this season.

"I will end up at 182 for state," Thompson said. "I was heavier for the summer but I will be down some weight for state."

Thompson, who transferred from Montini before his junior year, knows his role and wants to be an example for the rest of the team.

"I wrestle the top guys and we've got a great group here," he said. "The young guys we have were able to see me dominate. When I was at Montini there was a 'next man up' attitude. I was able to come here to Lockport and fill that role."

In the final at Ironman, on Saturday, Dec. 10 in Walsh Jesuit, Ohio, Thompson defeated Camden McDanel from Teays Valley in Ohio, by a score of 3-2.

Lockport had five guys go to Ironman, one of the top tournaments in the nation. Senior Logan Swaw placed eighth at 157 pounds after injury defaulting out following his blood round win.

With many of their top guys gone at Ironman, Lockport went 1-2 in dual meets on Dec. 10 at the Kenny Zabel Dual Meet Tournament at Minooka. There the Porters defeated West Aurora 44-23 but lost 37-32 to Yorkville and 33-30 to Edwardsville.

But the Porters rebounded for a big SouthWest Suburban Conference dual meet win on Friday, Dec. 16 by the score of 44-30 over host Homewood-Flossmoor.

Getting victories for the Porters against H-F was sophomore Malik Salah, who started out the bout with a 15-5 major decision at 220, which was followed by junior Wojtek Chrobak getting a pin in 1:50 at heavyweight, and sophomore Timmy O'Connor had a forfeit victory at 106 for a 16-0 lead.

Ahead 16-4, Wardlow registered a 20-5 technical fall at 120, and Liam Zimmerman followed that up with a pin in 4:41 at 126 for a 27-4 advantage. One bout later, freshman Chris Miller had a 17-1 tech fall at 138 for a 32-10 lead.

"Miller was one of the freshmen that have had to step in as the Porters try to get healthy.

"I was just like as a freshman I have nothing to lose," Miller said. "I just want to go my hardest and do my best out there. My goal is to make it to state."

As a member of the Homer Junior High wrestling team, which was second in the state last season and first the year before," Miller learned a few things. Not just about the sport but about looking to lead in the future.

"We have three freshmen from our Homer team on the varsity," Miller said. "It's a good look for the future. But we want to set the bar high for the younger kids. We want to know that when we are juniors and seniors, the younger kids will look up to you."

Oster, who is in his first season as head coach, knows the grind of the season will produce injuries. He's glad to have the younger guys step up.

"We had Jad Alwawi at 126, Carlos Munoz-Flores at 138, and Logan Swaw at 160 out with injuries," Oster said of the seniors. "But we have four freshmen on the varsity and Chris really stepped up at 138."

The Vikings, have two of the state's top wrestlers in seniors Deion Johnson at 113, and Vincent Robinson, at 132. Johnson had a 20-8 major decision and Robinson had a pin at 5:32. Both are currently ranked No. 2 in the state at their weights.

H-F also had pins at 152, 160, and an overtime win at 170 to close within 32-30. But Thompson got a forfeit victory at 182 and Nolting closed it out with a pin in 1:06 at 195 pounds.

An SWSC meet against Lincoln-Way West on Thursday, Dec. 22 was postponed because of weather. On Thursday and Friday, Dec. 29 and 30, the Porters are slated to be at the Flavin Invite in DeKalb. On Saturday, Dec. 31 at 10 AM, they will host Sandburg in an always big SWSC matchup.