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Sports

Cath. Memorial 42, Keefe Tech-Ashland 40: A near miss for the Broncos

By Brad Joyal/Daily News Correspondent

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The Broncos nearly pulled it off. Despite entering its first dual meet of the season against Catholic Memorial with an undermanned roster, the Keefe Tech-Ashland wrestling team held tough against the visiting Knights, and had the Knights not been saved by the buzzer at the end of the first round at 182 pounds, the Broncos might have won.

ASHLAND — The Broncos nearly pulled it off.

Despite entering its first dual meet of the season against Catholic Memorial with an undermanned roster, the Keefe Tech-Ashland wrestling team held tough against the visiting Knights throughout the entire match.

But though KT-Ashland, minus captains Nick Riordan and Micahel Crupi, had plenty of opportunities to start its season with a victory, it was CM that manufactured a lead after the 170-pound match and never let it go. The Knights eventually escaped Ashland Middle School with a 42-40 victory over the Broncos.

“I thought our kids were aggressive and physical, and at this point in the season that’s all we can ask for,” KT-Ashland co-coach Peter Zacchilli said after his team fell to 0-1. “We’re always telling the kids the outcome of a match in December means nothing; it’s really about getting to where we need to be in February.”

“There’s no question that we took a step in the right direction today.”

CM (3-1) really took control with the 182-pound match, as Sam Newcomb pinned Larry Gillis to give the Knights a 36-28 lead with only three matches remaining. With KT-Ashland trailing 30-28, Gillis almost earned a crucial victory when he was on the verge of pinning Newcomb at the end of the first period.

But the buzzer sounded, giving Newcomb new life. And in the second period, he bounced back to pin Gillis with 27 seconds left.

"Sam's one of our captains and he's one of our smartest wrestlers," CM coach Alex Strum said. "When he wrestled smart, things went well. He wasn't smart all the time, though, and it almost came back to bite him but he was saved by the bell."

Had Gillis gotten the pin in the first period, it would have given KT-Ashland a 34-30 lead. Instead, Newcomb put CM up by eight.

"It was a swing match," Gillis said. "I thought I could've gotten the pin but I just made one mistake in the second period that cost me. I think if I had even a half second more I would've been able to get the pin."

Although that match went in favor of CM, the Broncos had an answer when Vincent Palumbo took the mat to face Caelan Conboy-DePasquale at 195. With less than a minute remaining in the third period, Palumbo trailed Conboy-DePasquale 9-2.

Knowing a victory was necessary in order for a KT-Ashland comeback bid, Palumbo escaped Conboy-DePasquale's control and pinned him with 44 seconds left. The win gave the Broncos six points, cutting the Knights' lead to 36-34.

"I was gassed, but our coaches always preach that we have to find something deep inside of us. We have to get it done," Palumbo said. "I was really motivated to turn my match around. I wanted to get the win for my team."

While that victory gave KT-Ashland momentum, CM clinched victory when D.J. Trahan pinned Manoj Donepudi with 42 seconds left in the first period of the 220-pound match to take an insurmountable 42-34 lead with just one match left. In that final match, the Broncos' Brian Burns (285) won when he pinned Jonathan Valdez.

Jon Tessler (113) and Dave Sunderland (120) guided the Broncos to an early lead after Jared Swartz (106) was pinned by CM's Ryan Brown in the first match of the night. Tessler pinned Ivan Orup in the first period before Sunderland earned a major decision with a 10-0 win over Joe Gbedema.

Will Cummins (126) continued the Broncos' winning ways with a first period pin against Nate Fitzgerald. While that victory gave KT-Ashland a 16-6 lead through four matches, CM gained 18 quick points with two ensuing pins and a KT-Ashland forfeit.

Christian Alicea (152) and Beau Mumford (160) each pinned their opponents for KT-Ashland, putting the Broncos up 28-24. It turned out to be KT-Ashland's last lead of the night.

Although the Broncos couldn't upset CM, Zacchilli was happy to see his team perform well against the Knights.

"It's always nice to wrestle against private schools as a public school because we lose kids to private schools," Zacchilli said. "I think that any kids from Ashland who are in middle school or elementary school and were watching today might think twice about leaving.

"It was clear we can compete with these (private school) teams."