

GAWRONSKI, COWELL AND YAGER COMPETE AT STATE



Freshman Tyler Cowell secures a Reversal against his opponent from Cape Fear.



Sophomore Theo Yager works to control his opponent from Southern Alamance.

It wasn't the ending Junior Isaac Gawronski, Sophomore Theo Yager, or Freshman Tyler Cowell hoped for, but all three wrestled well this past weekend at the 3A State Wrestling Championships. Gawronski went 1-1 to advance to the quarterfinals, while Yager and Cowell both dropped their opening round matches. Normally a double-elimination tournament, this year's competition was single-elimination through the semifinal round, due to COVID concerns. That meant make it to the semifinals or your season is over, and only the top four in each weight class made placed vice the top six.

Gawronski, who entered the tournament ranked third in the state, came out of the gates strong earning a 16-1 technical fall victory over his Statesville High School opponent. Unfortunately, he was upset in the quarterfinals by the eventual State Runner-Up from Cape Fear 5-0, thereby ending his chances of reaching the podium.

Yager, who entered the tournament ranked 13th, looked impressive in his first match but ultimately came up short against the eventual third place finisher. Nonetheless, Yager wrestled extremely well and was in the match until the final 10 seconds when he gave up three Nearfall points, ultimately falling 5-0. Despite a slow start, Cowell rebounded late in his match, showcasing some of the skills that earned him a trip to the State tournament as the lone Freshman in the 120-pound bracket. Unfortunately, it wasn't enough and he fell to his Chapel Hill opponent 16-4.

When asked about the Team's performance, Coach Gawronski stated "We obviously hoped to do better today, but I'm still proud of all three wrestlers. I know Isaac was pretty upset he didn't make the podium, especially after winning regions, but that's the way it goes sometimes. He looked great in the first round and fought hard in the quarters as well, but his opponent just wrestled the better match today. Theo and Tyler also wrestled well and I was really impressed with their mindsets. A lot of fourth [regional] place finishers (i.e., top four from each region qualify) come in believing they can't win in the opening round because they're paired against another region's champion, but I didn't see that with either one. They both let it fly out there and that was great, because that type of confidence will serve them well in the future. I know all three felt robbed by the State's decision to remove the consolation rounds, and while I felt the decision was unwarranted given current conditions, I reminded them that focusing on "what ifs" is a waste of energy. All they can do now is move forward and start preparing for next year, and that's something I know these three will do. I wouldn't be surprised if they are on the mat in the next couple days in fact. Their dedication is what got them to this tournament in the first place. It didn't work out like they wanted, but the silver lining is it will only make them that much more hungry for next season."

Gawronski scores Nearfall points against his Statesville opponent in the opening round of the 3A State Championships. Gawronski went on to win by Technical Fall 16-1.

