



January 31, 2022

By Dennis Garcia

SportsTone.net

ASHEBORO - A new-look conference, the same result for the Asheboro High School wrestling team.

After capturing the past two Mid-Piedmont Conference league championships, the Blue Comets entered the realigned MPC this season with new teams, new wrestlers and new challenges. In the end, AHS came out of the conference season the same as the last two campaigns, capturing the league title after a 46-27 win over Ledford in their final conference match.

The Blue Comets have prevailed through another season in which it was tough to navigate by winning the league title and earning a No. 6 seed into the sectional tournament. AHS (25-4 overall) will travel to No. 3 North Henderson (21-4) along with MPC member Oak Grove (14-3) and West Rowan (19-3) for the first two rounds. Asheboro will meet West Rowan and North Henderson will face Oak Grove in first-round action with the second round also scheduled that night. The winner of that sectional will advance to action on Wednesday.

"The team did a wonderful job," veteran AHS wrestling coach Wes Berrier said, talking about a tough opening schedule and not having everyone healthy until very recently. "They responded in the new conference."

While AHS and Southeast Guilford were the kings of the previous MPC, Berrier said he expected the Blue Comets to continue that success in the realigned league.

"The competition was a lot more even this year," Berrier said. "In the past league, it was us and Southeast Guilford fighting it out every year. Everyone else was a step below. In the new conference, the kids prepared just like we would. We would look at rankings and none of the kids were from this conference other than a few individuals. Each team had one or two we needed to keep an eye on where Southeast Guilford would have four or five guys we had to pay attention to."

Not only did the Blue Comets face the challenge of new conference teams, but like the AHS basketball teams, the wrestlers didn't have a home venue as renovations at AHS kept those teams from hosting games at the school. Instead, the Blue Comets practiced at Teachey Elementary School and had just a few home matches, which were held at North Asheboro Middle School or the Asheboro Recreation Center Gym.

"It has affected us on the mental side, our sport is 80 to 90 percent mental," Berrier said. "It's been tough."

Though performing mostly on the road, battling injuries and being forced to stop for a period due to Covid protocols, the Blue Comets have been stout. Xavier Santos, who qualified for the state tournament last year at 106 pounds, is 32-16 in the 113-pound weight class. Diego Gutierrez is 26-3 at 126, Yu Chen is 31-5 at 138, Christian Diaz is back after missing a great deal of time with an injury, stalwarts Luke Lambeth (34-4 and ranked No. 5 in the state at 160), and twin brother Logan Lambeth (38-2 and ranked second at 182) are team leaders, Michael Brady (25-13) has had a strong second half of the season at 195 and Arhman Tyson is ranked third in the state at heavyweight..

With everyone finally healthy, Berrier is hoping that translates to a long run in the dual tournament and success at the individual state competition.

"The great thing about the state dual playoffs is that it doesn't affect rankings for the regionals," Berrier said. "You don't have to worry about anything. You just go out and wrestle your match."

The Blue Comets have been doing a great job of that all season.