

PREP WRESTLING



Freeman file photo

Mukwonago sophomore Josephine Stachowski and Arrowhead freshman Collin McDowell battle for an advantage in the 113-pound final during the Classic 8 Conference Meet at Mukwonago.

A trailblazer on the mat

Mukwonago's Stachowski is the first girl to ever qualify for the Division 1 state tournament

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MUKWONAGO — Josephine Stachowski decided that instead of being a part of history, she would create her own.

The Mukwonago sophomore became the first female at the Division 1 level to qualify for the WIAA Individual State Wrestling Tournament, and did so in emphatic fashion by winning the 106-pound title at the Fort Atkinson Sectional Saturday.

After earning an 11-1 major decision over Mount Horeb/Barneveld freshman Cole Cunningham in the first-place match, Stachowski received a standing ovation from the crowd.

"It was very exciting," Stachowski said. "There were a bunch of emotions that rushed through me, but the main thing was it felt really

good to represent my town and Mukwonago wrestling, to represent them as who I am, and it was just a rush of emotions."

Stachowski, who improved to 31-14 on the season, has been nothing short of dominant in the postseason. She pinned her first-round opponent in just 55 seconds before earning a 16-0 tech fall in the semifinals.

For Mukwonago coach Jon Wierzbicki, it was a moment

he'll never forget.

"You have some memorable moments and special experiences with athletes and the sport," Wierzbicki said. "The standing ovation she got was definitely just a legacy moment for her. She's put in so much time — all the kids have — but for her to have that experience and really to earn it, she either pinned or majored her way through the tournament."

"She's legit."

Stachowski became just the third female ever to reach state, joining Tomahawk's Alyssa Lampe (Division 2)

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WIAA DIVISION 1 STATE WRESTLING TOURNAMENT PREVIEW

Strong delegation of Waukesha County wrestlers heading to Madison

10 area competitors ranked top-5 in their weight classes

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WAUKESHA — There is no shortage of brotherly love at this year's WIAA State Individual Wrestling Tournament.

Nor has there ever been more potential for area state champions to be crowned.

Six different pairs of siblings from Waukesha County qualified for the state meet, and there are 10 different area competitors ranked in the top five of their respective weight classes heading into Thursday, when the preliminary round begins across all three divisions.

One of those wrestlers just outside of the top five at 160 pounds happens to be undefeated on the season. He also has a younger brother to take along for the ride. Waukesha West senior Magnus Kuokkanen is 35-0, while sophomore Xander Kuokkanen (138) will be making his state debut.

"It's been a goal my whole life since I was a little youth wrestler, to make it and try to win state," said Magnus Kuokkanen, who also qualified as a sophomore at 113 pounds.

That's not even the only set of brothers from West heading to Madison. Fresh-

man Isaiah Guerrero (126) and junior Xavier Guerrero (132) are also state-bound. The family affair continues down the road at Waukesha North with senior Elijah Zirbel (152) and sophomore Aiden Zirbel (145), both ranked 12th, making their first trip to the Kohl Center. "This year, I really took a big step in the mental game, and just the wrestling game in general," Aiden Zirbel said. "But, I've been wrestling with my older brother in practice, understanding what it takes to be at a high level, and just going out there and doing my best."

Other brothers making the trip west down I-94 include senior Aaron Botsch (ranked 9th at 220) and sophomore Johnny Botsch (10th at 160) of Brookfield East, freshman Ryan Gillis (113) and junior Jack Gillis (10th at 170) of the New Berlin co-op, and sophomore Thomas Perra (220) and junior Spiro Perra (285), also from New Berlin.

While all hope to make their mark and share special moments with one another, the weekend may belong to Arrowhead, just as it has multiple times in recent memory.

Of the six Warhawks who reached state — Muskego

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OAW INDOOR SPORTS COMPLEX

Staying active during the winter months

New Berlin complex provides a variety of activities for all ages

By Michael Grennell
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NEW BERLIN — A one-stop shop for families.

That's what OAW Indoor Sports Complex director of sales and rentals Dan Knoll said was the vision for the 153,000-square-foot complex that opened in New Berlin in October.

"Our owners, one owner has five children, the other owner has four children. (Director of operations Brad Henes) and I also have a lot of children," Knoll said. "You're running around to different complexes, you're running around to just different things. Most nights it's just you and your wife where you divide and conquer. So we all want to look for a place that can be a one-stop shop."

Now, nearly five months after it first opened its doors, the OAW Indoor Sports Complex appears to have made significant strides towards that lofty goal.

As one walks through the front doors and moves past the front desk, they are presented with a view of three large turf fields — each spanning roughly 24,000 square feet — that are host to a variety of sports, including baseball, softball, lacrosse and golf, to name a few.

"We don't cater to one group or another. We're open for business to everybody," Henes said. "And any kind of sport you can think of that's not water related we can pretty much handle it here."

Knoll pointed to a recent turf volleyball tournament as an example of their ability to host almost any sport.

"We've told every group here that nothing's off the table for us. If we can find a way to make it work, we'll try to make it work," Knoll said. "Turf volleyball they came in here four or five times with different setups trying to make it work, and then they finally figured out how to do it and we were able to run a turf volleyball tournament on a Sunday afternoon."

Walking past the fields and up a flight of stairs leads to the hard courts area of the complex. On this level, the space can be divided up into four basketball courts, six volleyball courts or eight pickleball courts, depending on what's needed.

But the fields and the courts are just one part of what the complex has to offer.

Like Knoll said, the goal was to provide a one-stop shop for families.

Walking back downstairs and further into the building is where

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Michael Grennell/Freeman Staff

The entrance to one of the three turf fields available for use at the OAW Indoor Sports Complex.

PACKERS

Future remains a mystery for Rodgers

Packers QB is still undecided as to whether or not he will return next season

Associated Press

GREEN BAY — Aaron Rodgers says he's still making up his mind about whether he wants to return to the Green Bay Packers next season.

"There will be no news today," the four-time MVP quarterback said Tuesday on "The Pat McAfee Show" on YouTube and SiriusXM. "No decision on my future."

Rodgers said after the season that he would try to make a decision about his 2022 plans in relatively short order rather than dragging out the process. The reigning MVP said at the time that he hadn't ruled out any option, including returning

to the Packers for an 18th season, retiring or requesting a trade.

When Rodgers sent out an Instagram post late Monday night thanking current and former teammates and coaches among others, it raised speculation that an announcement on his future could be forthcoming. Rodgers said Tuesday he just wanted to show some gratitude to people who have helped him over the past year.

"I just came out of a 12-day cleanse where you're eating a specific diet and you're going through these treatments every day and you're not really doing anything else," Rodgers said

during his 40-minute conversation.

"You've got to kind of turn everything else off, so you're not working out, you're not straining or anything. It's kind of a re-centering. It not only heals you physically, but I think it takes away mental stress and then the spiritual part I think is it allows you to kind of enjoy the meditations a little more, so when I come out, my first thought is intense gratitude for the people in my life."

Rodgers won his second straight MVP award less than two weeks ago. The Packers went 13-4 in the regular season and won a third straight NFC North title

before losing 13-10 at home to the San Francisco 49ers in the divisional playoffs.

After the season, Rodgers talked about making a decision by the time the free agency period begins next month. He continues to point out the importance of getting this done soon.

"I get it," Rodgers said. "There's not a lot to talk about football-wise and this will be a topic of conversation. But I am looking forward to making a decision and moving forward. I think it's best for me. It's best for the team. It's best for all parties involved. Let's just get this behind us."

The 38-year-old Rodgers did offer the Packers some reason for optimism.

He said he enjoyed the postseason conversations he had with team officials such

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Associated Press

Aaron Rodgers of the Green Bay Packers receives the AP Most Valuable Player of the Year Award at the NFL Honors show on Feb. 10 in Inglewood, Calif.

Wrestling

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was the only other area program to match that number — two are ranked No. 1 in the state. There hasn't been anyone more dominant than senior Mitchell Mesenbrink, who is 38-0 at 152 pounds. He's looking for his third consecutive state title and was also third at 120 as a freshman. Sophomore teammate Wyatt Duchateau (43-0) also sports an unbeaten record at 132 as he makes his first state appearance.

"He dislocated his kneecap the previous year and he tried to come back, but it just wasn't happening." Arrowhead coach Jeremy Miller said. "He's come out with a vengeance and hasn't looked back."

Two-time medalist Noah Mulvaney (2nd at 152 in 2020, 3rd at 170 in 2021) is ranked second at 170 and boasts a 43-1 record. Championship Saturday could feature even more red and blue, as freshman Colin McDowell (38-6) is seeded second at 106, sophomore Connor Crumer (33-11) is ranked third at 126 and junior Nate Druckrey (34-11) seventh at 138.

In all, there are 28 wrestlers representing the Classic 8 Conference at individual state.

"I think the Classic 8 really helps us really prepare for state," North coach Mason McMullen said. "You have guys come into tournaments like this undefeated, or come into the regionals undefeated, and then lose. We don't have that problem. We went out and changed the whole schedule and got the toughest competition we could get. All our guys have a good amount of losses because of good competition. And the Classic 8 helps with it."



LEFT: Cael Zilinski of Muskego pins the head of Alex Konlock of New Berlin during the 106 class in the finals at New Berlin West High School on Saturday. **RIGHT:** Andrew Martin of Pewaukee locks the arm of Jimmy Wollenberg of South during the 120 class in the finals at New Berlin West High School on Saturday.



Freeman file photos

Perennial state-power Mukwonago was hindered by a loaded Fort Atkinson sectional, settling for three state qualifiers. That includes history-making sophomore Josephine Stachowski (106), as well as two highly-ranked and defending state participants, senior Cody Goebel (3rd at 145) and junior Zach Elizewski (7th at 160).

"Both are seeded high and in good position in the bracket to just take it match by match," Mukwonago coach Jon Wierzbicki said. "Both of them are wrestling really well. Both had opponents from Milton they had to beat on back-to-back weekends. They're both peaking and wrestling at their best, so I'm really excited for them."

Goebel, a Wisconsin commit, was sixth at state last year at 132 when he saw his older brother, Tyler, win it

all at 138. Elizewski earned a fifth-place finish at 145.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, state took place in three different locations based on division last season, and all in one day.

"Bringing that experience, they've been in big matches," Wierzbicki said. "Part of my excitement is just to be back at the Kohl Center."

Oconomowoc junior Quintin Wolbert (44-2), who was fifth at 120 last season, is seeded second at 126 this time around and could very well see Crumer in the quarterfinals Thursday evening. Kettle Moraine is represented by senior Parker Schlueter, who comes in at 34-7 and the seventh-ranked 170-pound wrestler.

For Muskego, no one is ranked higher than ninth in the state (freshman Cole Reid at 138). But the War-

riors are riding high after a dominant showing at both team and individual sectionals. They'll be joined by Arrowhead at the UW Field House the following weekend for team state.

"It's cool. Not that many people get to do it," said Muskego freshman Cael Zelinski, ranked 10th at 106. "I've got to keep working hard. It's not over yet. I'm looking forward to it."

Outside of the Classic 8, there is plenty of potential to podium, and possibly more.

Pewaukee senior Andrew Martin (33-3) is seeded fourth at 120, as is Brookfield Central junior Benjamin Otto (37-2), now a three-time state qualifier, at 170, while Menomonee Falls senior Brayden Rosenow (33-5) is third at 195.

"I put a lot of hard work in this summer just to get where I am right now," said

Martin, who finished third at 106 last season. "I can't wait to get to state."

Brookfield East features five state qualifiers, led by juniors Brett Skaug (145) and Aiden Crawley, who are both ranked eighth in the state. Skaug and Crawley each made it to Madison as freshmen.

Put aside the sibling theme — it's been some time since Waukesha has been this well represented at state. All four city schools are sending at least two wrestlers to the Kohl Center.

"Props to the Waukesha Wrestling Club," West coach Derrick Amrhein said. "Those coaches have been coaching a ton of qualifiers, whether it's from West, North, or South. I think we had eight kids qualified today (Saturday) from Waukesha and they were all part of the Waukesha Wrestling Club."

At a glance

WHAT: WIAA State Individual Wrestling Tournament
WHERE: Kohl Center, Madison
WHO: Arrowhead freshman Colin McDowell, sophomore Connor Crumer, sophomore Wyatt Duchateau, junior Nate Druckrey, senior Mitchell Mesenbrink, junior Noah Mulvaney; Brookfield Central junior Benjamin Otto; Brookfield East junior Matthew Seim, junior Aiden Crawley, junior Brett Skaug, sophomore Johnny Botsch, senior Aaron Botsch; Catholic Memorial senior Fidel Jaramillo, senior Josiah Nathaniel; Hamilton senior Sam Behrndt; Kettle Moraine senior Parker Schlueter; Menomonee Falls senior Ben Kaus, senior Brayden Rosenow; Mukwonago sophomore Josephine Stachowski, senior Cody Goebel, junior Zach Elizewski; Muskego freshman Cael Zelinski, freshman Cole Reid, junior Matt Kinzel, junior Adam Dzevit, senior Dylan Cleveland, senior Emmett Bock; New Berlin freshman Alex Konlock, freshman Ryan Gillis, junior Jack Gillis, sophomore Thomas Perra, junior Spiro Perra; Oconomowoc freshman Jayden Yauck, junior Quintin Wolbert; Pewaukee senior Andrew Martin, freshman Caleb Cady, junior Jacob Bruner, senior John Mohr; Waukesha North senior Elijah Zirbel, sophomore Aiden Zirbel; Waukesha South junior Jimmy Wollenberg, senior Isaiah Balderas; Waukesha West freshman Isaiah Guerrero, junior Xavier Guerrero, sophomore Xander Kuokkanen, senior Magnus Kuokkanen
WHEN: Thursday — Division 1 preliminaries 3 p.m.; Division 1 quarterfinals approximately 5:15 p.m.; Division 2 and 3 preliminaries approximately 6:30 p.m. Friday — Division 1 consolation at 10 a.m.; Division 2 and 3 quarterfinals approximately 11:15 a.m.; Division 1 consolation semifinals approximately 1:45 p.m.; Division 2 and 3 consolation semifinals approximately 2:45 p.m.; Semifinals for all three divisions at 7 p.m. Saturday — Consolation wrestlebacks for all three divisions at 10 a.m.; Championships for all three divisions at 5:30 p.m.
COST: \$11 per session (plus online fees)

Stachowski

From Page 1B

and Macey Kilty of Stratford (Division 3). But no one had ever done it at the highest division, until now.

"It feels really good being the first girl in a male-dominated sport," Stachowski said. "It's good to show the upcoming girls that are maybe having struggles getting beat up by boys, it gives them hope and shows that hard work and determination does pay off. I'm still processing it a little bit."

Stachowski's season could have been finished just over three weeks ago.

With the arrival of the first-ever girls state wrestling tournament, there was the option for Stachowski to enter in the 107-pound weight class, where she would have been a heavy favorite. However, that would have prevented her from competing with the team for the remainder of the individual season, including the upcoming state meet.

"I had a talk with my coach and my dad and whatever would help the team, that's what I was there for," Stachowski said. "I don't regret going to boys state. It honestly wasn't that hard (of a decision). I truly wanted to help the team and finish the season with my teammates. They mean the world to me and they're a big part of my success."

Stachowski's presence was highly welcome. She helped the Indians win the loaded Milton regional, which she also won with a pair of pins, and that made all the difference as Mukwonago edged second-ranked Milton by 11 1/2 points.

While the Indians ultimately fell in a tight team section-

al dual against Stoughton, Stachowski was proud of how hard the team worked to get to that point.

"The fact that she had to really choose between being the first-ever state champion at 107 to do what we needed as a team ... in the Stoughton dual in the team sectional she went up a weight for us and fought at 113," Wierzbicki said. "It completely embodies our team message. She's very self-sacrificial. I couldn't ask for a better mentality and approach. Her wanting to do whatever's best for the team is so commendable."

Stachowski showed she was the real deal throughout the season.

After posting a 5-4 record at 106 pounds and reaching sectionals as a freshman, Stachowski had strong performances this season at the Battle On The Bay, where she was a semifinalist, and the E.H. Stech Invitational, where she took third in the 24-school tournament.

"She's seeded 10th at the (state) tournament," Wierzbicki said. "There are no free tickets to the state tournament. She really earned it."

"I think about her progress from last year, she definitely made some strides and her adjustment to competing against high school boys, she's just very smart with some of her tactics. Against girls she's able to smash and hit double legs. She made a lot of adjustments. She's so coachable."

Wrestling at 113 throughout the regular season, Stachowski and her coach saw it would be advantageous to move down a weight class for the postseason after she finished runner-up at the Classic 8 Conference Tournament.

"Obviously making lower weight can be a challenge,"

Stachowski said. "It's just eating healthy and putting in the work, but in the long run I knew I would have a better chance at state. Turning down the opportunity to wrestle at girls state, I wanted to show it doesn't mean I can't make it to boys state."

Stachowski has been around the sport throughout her childhood. Her older brother, Jacob, was a team captain and state qualifier for the 2017-18 Mukwonago wrestling team.

"He definitely was a big aspect of that," Stachowski said. "I grew up going to tournaments and watching wrestling. He did beat me up little bit, but that's how fell in love with the sport. Watching him have success was definitely a main part of my career. I wanted to be like him when I was younger."

Now Stachowski is inspiring a younger generation of female wrestlers not only in Mukwonago, but across the state, with her ground-breaking performance.

"She truly is a hometown hero," Wierzbicki said. "Eagleville Elementary where she went, they have such pride in her. The girls in her club looking up to her, I got a message from a mom. She said my two daughters just started wrestling. They idolize her. They look up to her so much."

"She's been in our Grizzly program doing our youth stuff since kindergarten." Wierzbicki has relished the opportunity to coach the sophomore.

"There's just a really magnetic way about her," Wierzbicki said. "She has a laugh that can light up the room. People are just drawn to her. It makes her easy to root for."

"There are so many things behind the scenes about her



Contributed photo

Mukwonago sophomore Josephine Stachowski poses with head coach Jon Wierzbicki after winning the 106-pound bracket Saturday at the WIAA Division 1 Fort Atkinson Sectional.

where she's technical and yet such a good worker. She just has this fight, this grit.

"I joked with her it's nice knowing famous people with all the messages I've got."

Of course, there's still one more meet to focus on. Stachowski's state journey begins Thursday afternoon against Sun Prairie sophomore Christopher Anderson at the Kohl Center in Madison.

"I'm looking forward to competing at such a big place, competing with a bunch of people from Wisconsin and showing how Mukwonago produces tough wrestlers, and that just because I'm a girl, you shouldn't underestimate me," Stachowski said. "I want to show I worked for it and deserve to be here."

Rodgers

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as coach Matt LaFleur, general manager Brian Gutekunst and executive vice president/director of football operations Russ Ball.

"The meetings were much different than they were in the past, in a positive way," Rodgers said. "There were some real honest conversations that I appreciate."

He wants to avoid a repeat of 2021, when his status with the team was uncertain until the start of training camp.

Rodgers reported for training camp on time last summer after skipping their mandatory minicamp, but he acknowledged his future with the organization was uncertain. At the time, he said he wanted more of a voice in the team's decision-making process.

His relationship with Packers management improved over the course of the season. Rodgers said it started with a meeting he had with Gutekunst shortly after arriving for training camp.

"I feel like that was kind of the first step to having a real free-flowing conversation and friendship," Rodgers said. "I'm definitely thankful for the work that he put in on the relationship, and Russ Ball as well. Matt and I, I believe every year we get

closer and more connected and feel better about our communication."

Rodgers said he also had to make some adjustments.

"It wasn't a one-way street," Rodgers said. "I knew that I had to grow as well. I had to be more comfortable with those conversations, with being responsive to them in a super-timely manner, trying to find kindness in the adverse moments or difficult conversations we had. I feel like we all grew and had a good year of communication, had nice conversations after the season. I felt really good at how that got tied up before I left town."

LaFleur and president/CEO Mark Murphy had said after the season they wanted Rodgers back in 2022. They indicated that was a unanimous decision among the team's main decision-makers.

The Packers seemed to make a move aimed at keeping Rodgers last week with the hiring of quarterbacks coach Tom Clements, who previously worked with the team from 2006-16.

Rodgers said Tuesday that he owes Clements "so much credit for my development" and added that "the game is better when Tom Clements is coaching because he's one of those special, special coaches."

OAW

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one can find offerings that most would consider unusual to find at a sports complex.

Below the hard courts there are rooms filled with gym equipment and rooms for yoga and Zumba classes. That's not unusual. But some people might not expect to look through a window and peer into the dance studio for Acts 17:28 Dance. Nor would they expect to see the signs for the private lesson rooms for Mozart's Gym Music School.

"You can come in, and if you have a child that's really into sports and one that's really into dance you can do both at once. We have our adult membership, then you can go in and get a workout," Knoll said. "With parents, you don't

really have a lot of time to work out because you're just always running your children every which way. So this also offers them a chance to do that. Or we have free WiFi throughout the building so you can just sit here with a laptop and work. Eat dinner here with food from the cafe. Just a place where you can pull up and stop for the night and be in one location instead of having to go all over God's green earth for an evening, or every evening."

The complex has already seen quite a bit of success in its short time in operation, whether it's renting out space to teams, leagues or for small group events such as camps and birthdays. Henes noted that since opening, the complex has had at least one birthday party rent out space every weekend, and that the camps they've hosted have been very popular and have averaged 100 kids each time

they've been offered.

"That's kind of what the beauty of this place is, is that there's so much space available," Henes said. "You know, Wisconsin in the winter months, it's hard. And that's what we noticed with our sports camps that became very popular, because when kids are out of school, parents are like 'What are we going to do with our kids?' and that's why that became very popular for us."

A monthly membership to the complex costs \$30 a month for individuals and \$50 a month for couples, after a \$25 enrollment fee. Veterans and seniors are eligible for a 10 percent discount on those rates as well.

For groups looking to rent a turf field, the rate runs at \$300 an hour for a full field, and \$150 an hour for a half field. The hard courts run at a rate of \$50 per hour.

As the weather will soon

warm up, there will be a greater push to go back outside to play, but Knoll isn't too worried about a dip in business. For one thing, the complex has plans to put up temporary courts on some of the turf fields during the summer months, expanding their capacity to eight basketball courts — which could make for a good location for travel ball tournaments, Henes noted. But also, the complex will be able to offer consistency for any group in case of inclement weather.

"The one thing we can offer is that it will be climate controlled, so it's air conditioned in the summer, it's heated in the winter, and no chance of rainouts," Knoll said. "So that's a few perks that we can offer to teams that, if you want to guarantee an event to go off no matter what, that's what we're going to try to offer people."

2022 BASKETBALL BRACKET CONTEST

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