

# Firebirds ready for the challenge festival has to offer

by Lyle Fulton

Needing a stiff test for some of his more experienced wrestlers, Phoenix varsity wrestling Coach Dick Brown entered his team into the Fulton Athletic Booster Club Wrestling Festival. The tournament will not only show him how the Firebirds stack up against Section III's best, but some of the top wrestlers from other sections in the state will also be present.

"It's going to be a real challenge for all of our kids," Coach Brown said. "It will tell how good our kids are. I needed to challenge the real good kids and that is why I got into (the tournament)," he continued. "It's a good chance to test those kids to see where they are and where they have to go."

One Firebird who already has plenty of tournament experience this season is Jamie Richardson. Richardson, who will wrestle at 177 pounds, placed first in the Central Square Tournament and added a second-place finish at the Anderson Tournament, which was held at Cicero-North Syracuse.

Richardson, who is in his fourth year on the varsity team, entered the season 16 victories shy of tying the school record for most career wins at 80. It didn't take the senior too long to reach that goal as he won his 16th match of the season, against one defeat, Thursday in Cortland to tie the record. Richardson had a shot to break the record Tuesday when the Firebirds wrestled Marcellus.

Two other Firebirds who hope to have the opposition seeing double are freshmen Clay and Chad Russell. Clay won the title at

91 pounds in the Anderson Tournament and followed that up with a second-place finish at Central Square. Chad matched his brother, also placing first at the Anderson Tournament at 105 pounds and second at Central Square. So far this season Clay has a 13-4 record while Chad is 10-3.

Coach Brown also noted that sophomore Gregg Neish has been wrestling well and could have a strong tournament. Neish will wrestle at either 119 or 126 pounds and is 16-4 this season.

Rounding out the Firebird line-up will be Dan Logee at 98 pounds, Scott Wilcox at 112, Brian Hart at 132, Matt Gabriele at 138, Mike Mogilewski at 145, Keith Strupp at 155, Ernie Mason at 167, and Chris Virginia at 215. In 18 matches this season

Virginia has posted 13 victories.

By already having participated in three individual tournaments prior to the Fulton Wrestling Festival, Coach Brown hopes that it will give his team that much more experience come Saturday.

"It does help that we have had a lot of matches and it does give us a little bit of an edge, although we haven't seen the competition we will see in the Fulton tournament. It will be a new experience for us," Coach Brown observed.

On the dual meet side of things this season, the Firebirds are 7-2 overall and 1-0 in the Metro League. Coach Brown noted that his team's win against East Syracuse-Minoa, which is in the Onondaga High School League North American

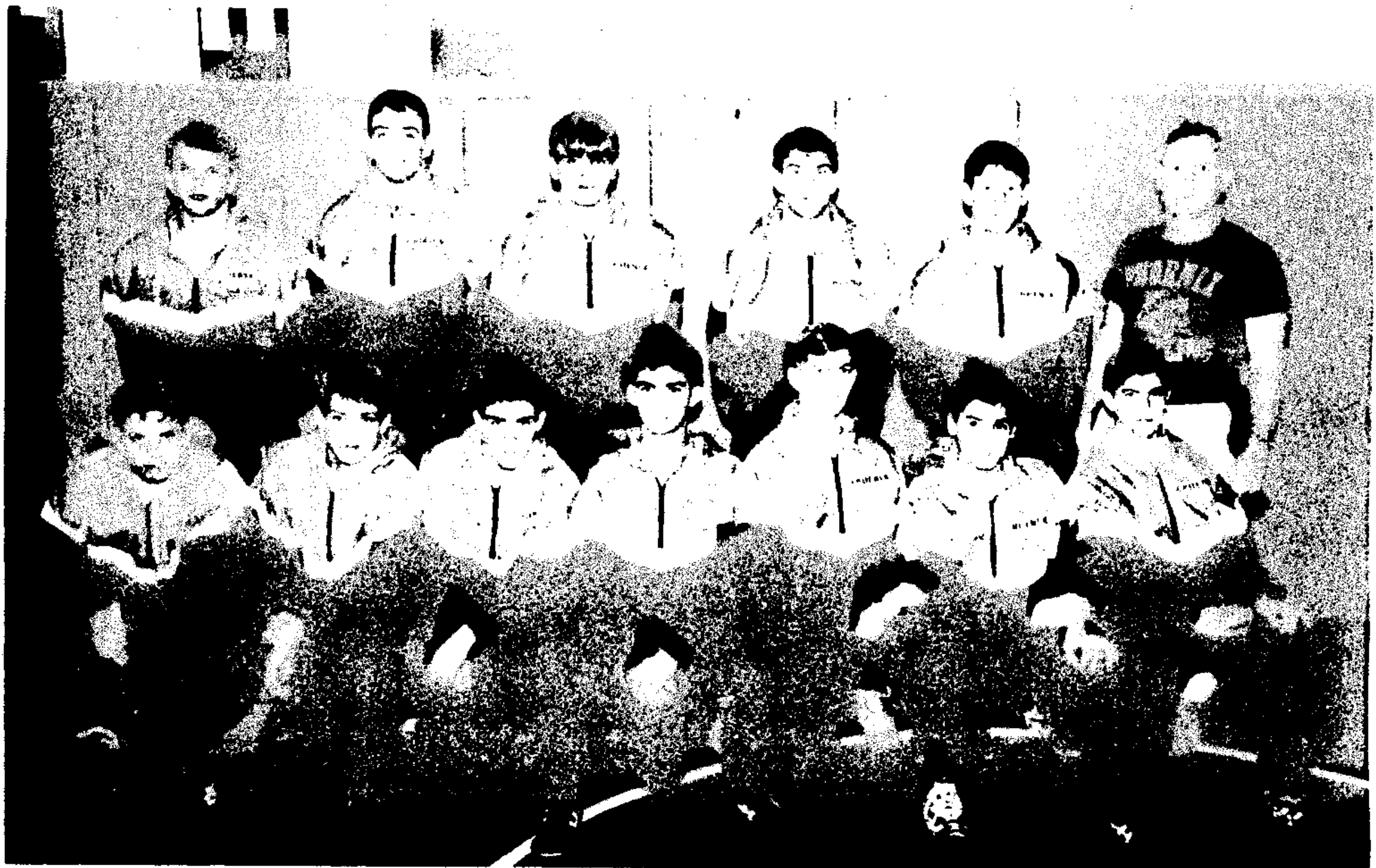
Division, was a boost for the team.

"ES-M was a good win for us," he said. "They are usually a pretty good team."

While Coach Brown considers this team better than some in the past few seasons, he thinks that his wrestlers fare better when they compete at individual tournaments.

"It's a better individual team than a dual-meet team," the coach admitted. "We have a couple of kids that are capable of winning tournaments."

The Firebirds will find out where they stand in the course of the next few weeks. After the Fulton Wrestling Festival, Phoenix may compete in the Section III Dual Meet Tournament before the Metro League Meet and the Class B Tournament.

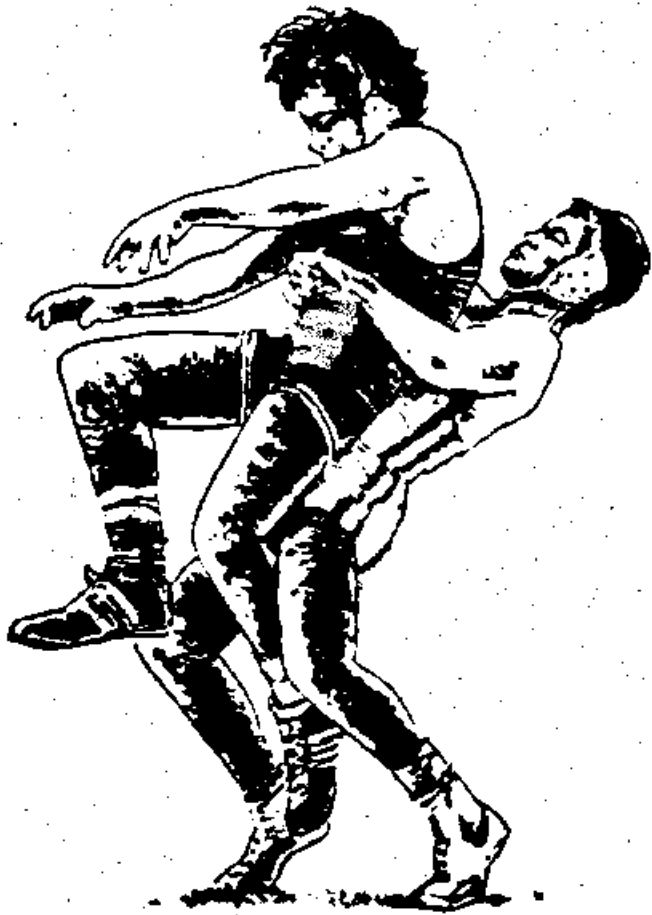


Firebird wrestlers

Members of the Phoenix varsity wrestling team that will be participating in the Fulton Wrestling Festival include, from front left, Bryan Hart, Gregg Neisch, Scott Wilcox, Mike Tijernia, Chad Russell, Dan

Logee, and Clay Russell. In the back row are Chris Virginia, Jamie Richardson, Keith Stupp, Mike Mogilewski, Matt Gabriele, and Coach Dick Brown.

-Valley News photo by Lyle Fulton



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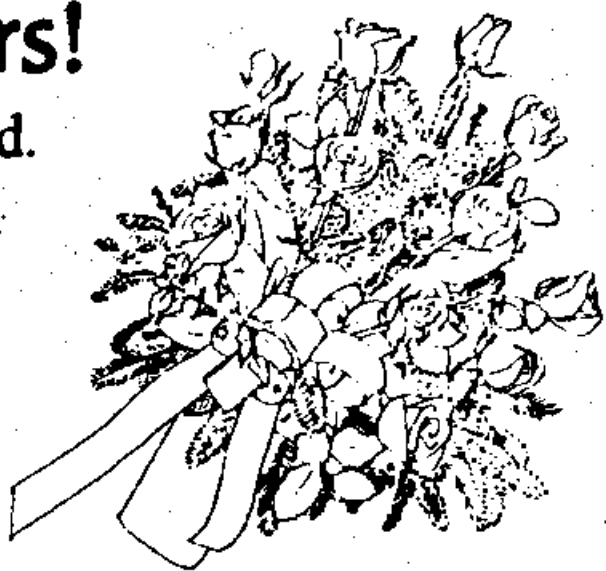
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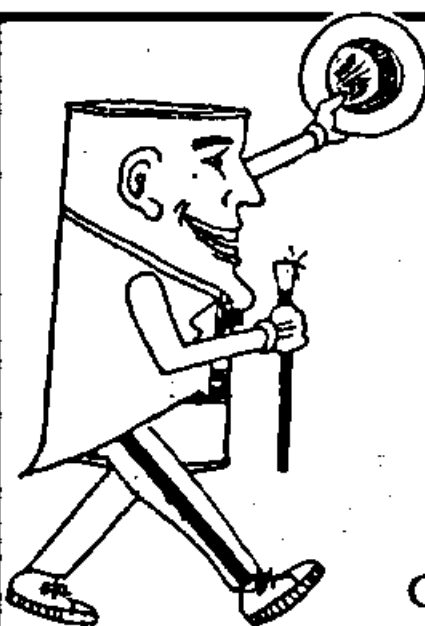
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