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By EARL WATT • Daily Leader

With 27 teams competing for the title, Liberal found itself in eighth place after the opening day of competition at the Rocky Welton Invitational at Garden City.

Three Liberal wrestlers made it to the semi-finals, but none advanced to the championship match.

Liberal planned to move through the consolation brackets Saturday to improve its team standing.

In the 152-pound division, Tyler Sutherland defeated Phil Nygren from Roosevelt Colo. 5-1 and scored a fall over M.Backus of Canyon Randall to advance to the semi-finals. But Sutherland lost 6-2 to B.

Fulbright from Maize. Sutherland continued to wrestle Saturday.

Nate Davis at 189 had a first round bye and then defeated D. Good of Ponderosa by fall. He then lost to N. Huerd of Roosevelt, 5-3. Davis continued to wrestle Saturday.

Ricky Gomez at heavyweight won his first match over C. Blaylock of Garden City and his second by fall over J. Lee of Dodge City to reach the semis. Gomez lost 8-3 to L. Cerna from Emporia.

All three lost to the same takedown move, something coach Pewthers wants to address prior to the regional wrestling tournament.

Liberal's 103-pound Luis Escarcega lost two matches and was eliminated.

At 112 pounds, Adrian Salas won his first match 8-2 over D. Cisneros of Alamosa, Colo., but lost his second match 2-0 to Franco Antilian of Scott City. Salas advanced to wrestle Saturday in the consolation bracket.

At 119, Victor Perez lost his first match 4-0 to Nick Burns of Canon City, Colo., and lost his second by fall to L. Fernandez of Sand Creek. Perez was eliminated.

Addea Reniah at 125 won his first by fall over Jesus Contreras of Scott City, lost his second by fall to S. Seton of Basehor Linwood, and lost his third match to V. Vasquez of Dodge City. Reniah was eliminated.

At 130 pounds, Victor Cruz won 5-4 over C. Duhr of Andale, and lost

9-2 to Ryan Cokely of St. James Academy in his second match. Cruz continued to wrestle Saturday.

Liberal's 135-pounder, Lorenzo Rios, lost his first match 12-6 to D.

Pike of Basehor Linwood, and lost his second by fall to J. Hunt of Canyon Randall. Rios was eliminated.

At 140, Allen Catalin won his first match 10-3 over J. Keleian of Roosevelt, Colo., but lost his second match 11-7 to D. Archuletta of Alamosa, N.M. Catalin wrestled Saturday.

At 145, Austen Pitts lost first match 11-0 to L.. Burley of Great Bend, and won by fall over K. Fitzmeyer of Maize in his second match.

Pitts wrestled Saturday.

Carlos Rodriguez, won his first match at 160 pounds 9-2 over J. King, of Rio Rancho N.M., won second match 15-1 over B. Rothenbucher Canon City, Colo. In his third match, Rodriguez lost by fall to B.

Armstrong of Andover. Rodriguez wrestled Saturday.

At 171, freshman Justin McPhail won by fall over G. Neishberg of Lamar, Colo., and lost 5-4 to K. Hamme of Scott City. McPhail wrestled Saturday.

Liberal's 215-pounder, Chuy Torres, won his first match by fall over DJ Salazar of Alamosa, but lost his second 14-4 to R. Garcia, of Canon City. Torres wrestled Saturday.

Rio Rancho led the event after Day 1 followed by Roosevelt, Emporia, Ponderosa, Scott City and Liberal.

"We have a lot of work to do," Pewthers said. "We have a long way to go."

Although the Redskins were in eighth place, Pewthers believed the team could reach third.

"If we wrestle to our ability, I think we can come up the back side and get back into third," he said. "We have to win the close matches in order to win these tournaments."

EDITOR'S NOTE — Bob Pitts contributed to this story. See Monday's Leader for final results.

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