

COLUMBIA - While sophomore Bill Sexton's heroics clinched the 3A State title for the **West-Oak** High School **wrestling** team on Saturday at Dreher High School against **Chapin**, the Warrior seniors were without a doubt an anchor for the match - and all season.

Those five seniors - Andrew Addis, Nick Bower, Brandon Croney, Phillip Kern and Randy Warren - leave behind a legacy and a State crown for future Warriors to lean on.

They're only the second **West-Oak** senior class for any sport that leaves as State Champions, with the 1994 **wrestling** team being the other, which Bower knows puts them in rare air in Westminster.

"It's huge," Bower said. "Everybody still talks about the '94 State champs; so now when we look back when we're old like they are, everybody will be looking back at us.

It's great." The biggest legacy, aside from the state title of course, is the unblemished mark of 35-0, according to Croney.

"We're not only going out as State Champions," he said. "We're going out as undefeated State Champions.

It feels great." Addis just enjoys feeling like he was part of something that was greater than himself.

"It feels good being a part of something that resets the standard at **West-Oak**," Addis said.

All season, head coach Jeff Jordan raved about the leadership quality his seniors possess, and those very qualities came to fruition on the mat Saturday in Columbia.

All of the seniors, save for Addis who didn't compete in the State Final, won their respective matches, anchoring the team as they had all year.

That's something that Kern feels has earned his team, not just the seniors, the respect that they've deserved all along.

"It gives (the **West-Oak** community) something to talk about," he said with a grin. "We're going to walk through town, and everybody will know that we're the State Championship team. They'll know us for years and years to come." It didn't come easy for the quintet though, as Warren admits.

"We've worked our butts off for this," he said. "It's amazing to finally get it in our hands. The road was hard, but we still manage to bring it though, and that's amazing." No one is going to tell the Warrior seniors that they didn't earn it.

It would be impossible to after they took down the four highest ranked teams, aside from themselves, on their way to the title.

"We definitely didn't have the easy road at all," Bower said. "Nobody can say we got lucky and won it, because we worked our butts off." Kern shared his teammates sentiments.

"I love that we had the hard road," he said. "We can look back and say, 'Is there anybody in the state that didn't have a chance to take it from us?' Everybody had a decent chance to be where we are now.

We're battle-tested, and we can say we earned it.

It feels good to know that we're without a doubt the best team in the state." So with the State title in hand, these seniors can now sit back and watch their legacy grow, and it undoubtedly will amongst the ever-supportive Warrior faithful, which coach Jordan hopes will bode well for the future of the program.

"I hope it inspires some people to get into it and the younger kids to get involved," Jordan said.

"It would really help us to grow our program." brooks@dailyjm.com.

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