

WESTMINSTER - The **West-Oak wrestling** team is headed back to the state championship after defeating Crescent 51-18 on Wednesday night in front of a deafening home crowd to secure the Upper State Championship.

The Warriors, ranked No. 2 in 3A, improved to 24-1 on the season with the win over No. 3 Crescent - a team **West-Oak** beat 36-30 in a closer match on Jan. 10.

"Last time we wrestled (Crescent), it wasn't the score we wanted, and I feel like tonight we showed that we worked really hard in between that period of time," junior heavyweight Gavin James said. "We showed that we really were chasing something, chasing state."

James, Ben Martin, Damien White, Ian James, Ethan Powell, Tate Capps, Cameron Hamby, Justin Smith, Jared Smith, Jordan Lee and Matt Williams all won their matches on Wednesday, with Lee, Williams, Gavin James, Justin Smith and Jared Smith all winning by pins.

The Warriors will face No. 1 **Battery Creek** on Saturday at 1:30 p.m. at Dreher High School in Columbia for the state title - a team **West-Oak** lost to in a close match, 37-33, on Jan. 21.

"It gives us another shot at **Battery Creek**. We lost to them earlier but any time you're a competitor, you love to get a second chance," **West-Oak** head coach Greg Brewer said. "We're excited about the opportunity. They're tough, we're gonna have to make sure that we're ready so we'll have to have two good days of practice and be ready to go."

Brewer credited sophomore Damien White, who wrestled the second match at 152 pounds, for creating positive momentum with his win early on and getting the team rolling heading into important matchups.

"Damien dropped some weight and cut down, that gave us a better matchup," Brewer said. "In my opinion, he's the hero of the dual because of where we started, if we go out there and we lose the next one then they've got all the momentum going into their really good guys."

The Warriors will get right back to work at practice the next few days before Saturday's big matchup with **Battery Creek**. As junior Jordan Lee said after Wednesday's match, **West-Oak** isn't satisfied yet. The Warriors have their eyes on the bigger prize that awaits them in Columbia.

"Our mindset going into this was to do our own thing. We're **West-Oak**, it's our house, we're gonna go out there and wrestle our way, not theirs," Lee said.

"We don't want to focus on just this one win because we're not done yet. We're not gonna celebrate anything until we win state. That's our goal."