

WESTMINSTER - With everything on the line in the Upper State fi-nals on Wednesday night, **West-Oak** head coach Jeff Jordan had no problem rolling the dice.

Working with a roster loaded with talent, it wasn't so much a gamble for the No. 1 Warriors as it was a vote of confidence against No. 4 Eastside, and the payoff was a trip to Dreher High School for the State Championship on Saturday against Chapin.

Having made seven mid-match changes from the original starting lineup, the Warriors (36-0) emerged with a 31-24 victory to clinch their first trip to Columbia since 2003, while they'll be looking for their first State title since the 1994 season.

And while it was unconventional, the results were nothing short of beautiful for Jordan and his squad.

"I'm sure people were doubting what we were doing by moving people around and that kind of stuff ... but it's a great feeling," Jordan said.

"Every last one of them gave us everything they had whether they won or lost. It didn't make a difference, because they gave everything that had." There was plenty of credit to go around, but maybe more than anyone, it was perhaps the final three wrestlers the Warriors sent to the mat who deserved the biggest pat on the back.

After Eastside grabbed a 24-21 lead on a major decision from Beija Canova in his 145-pound match, it was Chris Welborn stepping up huge with a major decision of his own to reclaim a 25-24 advantage for **West-Oak**.

Matt Westbury then delivered with a win at 160, setting the stage for senior Randy Warren, who came into the final match of the night with his team holding a 28-24 advantage.

Needing to avoid a major decision to clinch the win, he was able to do that in a tight match, as he held on in the waning seconds for a 5-4 victory to start the celebration.

"You've got a senior right there, and that's what you bank on," Jordan said.

For Warren, it was business as usual, as he didn't enter the match with the mindset of simply not wanting to lose.

"I knew I didn't have to win, but I was out there to win like always," he said.

"I knew I had the match in my hand. I just needed a few more seconds, the crowd behind me and I knew I was about to win the Upper State title for my team." And while it was his call to juggle the lineup in a delicate chess match with Eastside head coach Jack Kosmicki, Jordan wasn't about to take any credit for what transpired Wednesday - even if he deserved his fair share. "It took a little moving around, but we came out and the kids wrestled great," Jordan said. "But, I get no credit for this.

This is all my assistants and all my wrestlers.

"And, boy, they got after it." **West-Oak** 31, Eastside 24 103 - Rogers (W) tech. fall Clark, 21-6 112 - Anderson (E) maj. dec.

Dickert, 11-0 119 - Croney (W) won by forfeit 125 - C. Kern (W) dec. Langrehr 130 - Simmons (E) maj. dec.

Sexton, 13-3 135 - Walker (E) won by forfeit 140 - Jones (E) dec. Bower, 5-2 145 - Canova (E) maj. dec.

James, 11-0 152 - Welborn (W) maj. dec.

Gemberling, 13-5 160 - Westbury (W) dec.

Fernandez, 6-3 171 - Warren (W) dec. Lake, 5-4 189 - Severance (W) dec. Scott, 3-0 215 - P. Kern (W) maj. dec.

Berdugo, 12-4 285 - Gallimore (E) dec. Kirk, 1-0 eric@dailyjm.com | 882-2385.

Copyright 2011, Oconee Publishing, All Rights Reserved.