

Sports



SUBMITTED | JONATHAN SMITH

Franklin High School's wrestling team celebrates with the trophies it earned Saturday, Jan. 15, by winning Pool A and the overall championship of the 2021 Matt Bryant Memorial Duals in Franklin.

Franklin wins Matt Bryant Memorial Duals

**BY TITUS MOHLER
STAFF WRITER**

The Franklin High School wrestling team went 5-0 Saturday, Jan. 15, including defeating Thomas Dale High School in the championship dual to win the 2021 Matt Bryant Memorial Duals, which were held at Franklin High School.

Eleven teams participated in the event, including those from Southampton High School and Windsor High School.

"When people watch wrestling, they see individuals going against other individuals," Broncos Head Coach Daniel "Bull" Johnson said. "They sometimes forget it is very much a team sport. These kids motivate, encourage and celebrate each other, and we've been fortunate enough to bounce back from illnesses and injuries to bring home

the trophy for only the second time in the history of the (Matt Bryant Memorial) tournament."

Franklin Assistant Coach Johnnie McKeller noted that the Broncos came out a little flat to start the event Saturday.

"But as the day went on, we regained our focus and our fire in order to beat Thomas Dale and be the overall tournament champion," McKeller said.

The Broncos won Pool A, and the Thomas Dale Knights won Pool B to set up the overall title showdown.

McKeller stated that Franklin finished 4-0 in its pool, defeating Northumberland High School, Essex High School, Lancaster High School and Southampton before crossing brackets to determine the overall champion.

"I cannot be prouder of the way these young men

and young women have worked to get to this point," McKeller said of the Broncos wrestlers. "They are not only tremendous student-athletes but amazing kids as well. I am truly thankful to be able to coach what had started out as a team but is now a family."

Johnson noted that Franklin is now 20-4 overall on the season, and McKeller later highlighted individual Broncos leaders and their records — Bishop Joyner (24-1), Ayden Banks (23-3) and Sam Harrison (18-4).

The 11 teams participating Saturday included those from Franklin, Southampton, Windsor, Atlantic Shores Christian School, Essex, Hertford County High School, Lancaster, Norfolk Christian High School, Northumberland, Petersburg High School and Thomas Dale.



Franklin High School's Bishop Joyner, right, wrestles during a match against Essex High School. Joyner has a 24-1 record so far this season.



Anthony Brown, of Franklin High School, grabs the leg of an Essex High School wrestler during a match Saturday, Jan. 15.



Franklin High School's Devin Deshields stays on his feet while holding the leg of a wrestler from Essex High School.



Curtis Jordan, of Franklin High School, applies pressure from above against an Essex High School opponent.



Franklin High School's Markelyn Fenner, top, wrestles against a competitor from Southampton High School during the 2021 Matt Bryant Memorial Duals on Saturday, Jan. 15, in Franklin.