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MAGIC ACT: Meramec Rallies From 22-4 Deficit In Historical Win Over Neosho At Meramec Duals

In what may have been the biggest dual meet comeback ever in the fabled history of the St. Louis Comm. College - Meramec wrestling program, the Magic scored 24 unanswered team points to pull off an improbable 28-22 win over ninth ranked Neosho College Friday at the Meramec Duals.

“I’d say that’s pretty big comeback to be behind by that many points,” said head coach Ron Mirikitani, now in his thirty eighth season. “It was very, very satisfying to see guys come back and wrestle that hard and come back and win that meet.”

The comeback’s necessity was triggered by a rash of injuries and illness. The Magic were missing starters in three weight classes and opted to bump several wrestlers up a weight class, a gamble that could have backfired against a quality program like Neosho.

“We needed a split at 125 and 133 and thought that Gary (Brooks - McCluer S.) could wrestle well with that kid,” said coach Mirikitani. “We knew he was really, really good. He got pinned, which really hurt us. We moved (Kyle) Hatchel (Francis Howell N.) up to 141 and that kid (Neosho’s Jeremy Lawley) was just a lot bigger and stronger.”

Down 16-0 in a blink, Meramec turned to 149 pound All-American Kyle Foley (Oakville) to key the rally. Foley easily disposed of Ty Jaquess in a 9-2 decision. But, the Magic were forced to forfeit the 157 pound slot when Bobby Conn (Marquette) was injured earlier in the evening in his match against Rochester College.

With the deficit at 22-4, 2007 St. Louis Post-Dispatch Wrestler Of The Year Donald Woods (McCluer N.) would have to win in order for Meramec to have any chance. Battling Neosho’s Ken Carney, the match was a frustrating 0-0 after one period, 3-0 Woods after two, and a 7-2 win.

“He kept trying to hang on to me and slow me down and just hanging on the whole time,” said Woods. “I just had to kind of wear him out so he’d get tired and my stuff would start working. It just broke open in the third period because he stopped defending and I could just shoot in on his legs and score.”

And score the Magic did. Dirk Hurron (St. Agnes, VA), at 174 pounds, made a third period comeback, executing a takedown with just :38 left in the match to take a 3-2 lead. Hurrin, who was losing 2-0 after two periods, went on to a 5-2 victory over Drakkar Klose.

“The kid wrestled a smart match. He knew the situation, that we were down and I needed bonus points and he wasn’t going to give it up,” said Hurrin. “I just kept coming at him and I knew I’d eventually get him, get a takedown or two.”
An inspirational aspect of the comeback came in the 184 pound match as Jordan Parks (McCluer N.) was returning to action after a broken wrist and a seven week layoff. Thrown into the line up and bumped up a class from his normal 174, Parks was game for anything. “I came back and worked my butt off. Coach was like, ‘Hey, you got a shot to wrestle today.’ I was like, ‘I’m ready!”

And Parks came out like he was ready, battling Tim Cross late into a tough first period that saw the Magic grappler holding a slim 2-0 lead. Late in the period, Parks saw his opening.

“He was like a bulldog, he kept going straight forward,” said Parks. “I just knew, sooner or later, he’s going to keep going too hard and that’s when I’m going to throw him and then he went too hard, I threw him, and got him, got him right on his back.”

The pin with :16 left in the first period electrified the crowd and team, and brought Meramec back to within six points at 22-16. Deron Winn (Liberty, MO), also up a class at 197, went through his opponent, Sam Robbins, like a buzz saw. Racing to a 10-1 second period lead before pinning him at the :38 mark of the second and putting the two teams into a 22-22 tie.

Also bumped up a class to heavyweight from his customary 197, Jamelle Jones (Dover, DE) put the finishing touches on the night when, after a tough first two periods and holding a 3-1 edge, he pinned Dan Pynn for the 28-22 final meet score.

“This team’s got a lot of character, and it says a lot that we can move guys up a weight class and still win,” said coach Mirikitani. “The top three - Dirk, Deron, and Jamelle were all very, very successful in high school. They know how to compete, they want to win, they’re all good team players. They can step it up when they have to.”