Wayne Trace participated in the 35th annual Van Buren Wrestling Invitational on Friday and Saturday, Jan. 18-19. The two-day tournament had 23 teams competing for top place honors.

The Raider wrestling team had never won this tournament, but would be one of the top contenders this year.

After three rounds of wrestling on Friday evening, Wayne Trace's first goal had been met. Not one wrestler had suffered two losses, and all wrestlers remained alive to wrestle on Saturday.

Finishing perfect on Friday evening, Clemens, Miller, Showalter and Temple advanced into the championship rounds on Saturday as the remainder of the team would be battling in the consolation rounds.

Carey sat atop the team standings ahead of Wayne Trace by 12 points. Hopewell Loudon and Riverdale were in third and fourth place. Wayne Trace lost two wrestlers from the championship round, but Clemens and Showalter picked up wins, ensuring them a championship match.

Taylor, Miller, Temple and Pierce fought back through the consi's and wrestled for valuable placement points in the finals round.

The team race heated up as both Carey and Wayne Trace had six wrestlers each in the finals.

For the Raiders, Taylor picked up a fifth place finish, and Justin Pierce added a fourth place finish for the Raiders. Both Miller and Temple battled back and picked up third place finishes.

Clemens (106) battled Keysor from Columbus Grove in the championship match. Clemens dominated the match from beginning to end against last year's district qualifier. Scoring a major decision of 14-5, Clemens added bonus points to the team score.

Showalter (138) was Wayne Trace's last wrestler to be vying for a VBI championship title. He would be wrestling head-to-head with No. 1 seeded Higgins from Carey. Showalter started a little slow, trading takedowns and reversals. Eventually, he picked up the pace, and Higgins had no answer, losing 13-7.

Wayne Trace's ultimate goal was realized when Carey was announced as the runner-up and the team knew they were team champions.

The team outcome was decided in the finals matches with Carey only picking up one win and Wayne Trace winning five of six.

"I knew we had a decent shot. We knew it was going to be to the wire, but we felt good about our chances. Every wrestler picked up a win today and most of the boys battled back to wins after a loss and that's what it takes," commented coach Dennis Stabler.

"Wayne Trace has never won this tournament and have only ever had two champions. Today, we matched that with Clemens and Showalter taking first," stated coach George Clemens. "I am very satisfied with the performance my wrestlers gave this weekend. I think we only lost a couple of matches we shouldn't have. We had six make it to the finals and two were only one win away. Most people forget how young we are. This team is gaining confidence and has not realized its potential yet."

Note: Due to an unfortunate oversight, this article did not get published in the Jan. 23 Progress. We regret the omission.