

Falcons have young, inexperienced team

BY DAN O'MEARA
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WRESTLING

It will be a learning year for the Farmington High wrestling team, which enters the 2001-02 season with very little experience.

"It's probably one of the youngest teams we've ever fielded," said Al Beyer, who has been coaching the Falcons since the mid 1980s.

Farmington didn't have a lot of seniors last year - Aaron Turk, Mike Murtland, Brett Brown and Stephen Wayne - and Rob Easterday, who wrestled at 130, is the team's only senior this year.

Of the 35 wrestlers on the team, nearly 30 are freshmen and sophomores. The Falcons have eight 103-pounders, but only two of them weigh more than 100 pounds.

"Last year we didn't have a real strong team, but we had four seniors who could carry their own just because they were seniors," Beyer said.

"When you don't have seniors, it's asking a lot of a young team to be at the same level as kids two and three years older than they are."

The Falcons have four juniors who have varsity experience. They are Cam Murtland (145-52), Mike Kish (140-45), Matt Nickels (160) and Courtland Bartlett (171).

Sophomores Jon Schwartz (125), who was around .600 in his first year, Lance Dawson (112-119) and Nick Belek (162) represent the extent of wrestlers with varsity mat time.

Belek won't be able to wrestle, however, until he gets the OK from his doctor when he is fully recovered from a knee injury he suffered playing football.

The team goals will be "to keep their work ethic up and their attitude the way it is because it's excellent," Beyer said. "And, when we do wrestle somebody of our own skill level, we want to be able to compete on an equal basis."

"We're going to have freshmen and sophomores in the lineup who probably shouldn't be in the varsity lineup. Because we're so young, that's what we have."

"With some weight classes, if we're real young, we'll probably void it and let them wrestle JV until they get a little more seasoned. We have to go match by match with them; we don't want to discourage anybody."

Farmington begins the season tonight in a double dual meet at Plymouth Canton. Farmington will wrestle Monroe and Canton.

CATHOLIC CENTRAL

Shamrocks' coach Mike Rodriguez will be the first to tell you the team he'll take to a tourney at Bay City Western Saturday will not be the same team that will begin state tourney play in February.

Oh, the athletes might be the same, but they'll be two different wrestlers from beginning to end.

"I think we'll be tougher at the end of the season. We're just not a team that starts out fast," said Rodriguez, whose team was 17-7 in dual meets. "We're not going to start out beating on anybody. But by the end of the year, I think we'll be very strong."

Whether CC is as strong at the end as last year's team, which advanced to the Division 1 quarterfinals, will depend on how quickly the younger wrestlers develop.

"We're young in spots, but we've got some young guys who can make a difference," said Rodriguez. "Some of these guys have seen a lot of competition in AAU tournaments and such."

The young guys will help, but the top returnees will set the tone. Senior Ryan Rogowski, the state runner-up at 160, will move up to 185, but will miss the first few weeks due to surgery.

Two other players off the Shamrocks' football team will also lead the way in the upper classes - Eric Hayamith at 215 and Pat Clark at heavyweight.

The lighter weights are also a veteran group with sophomore Matt Steintrager (103), junior Matt Kostera (112) and junior Shane Randall (119).

Senior Anthony Kreucher and freshman Brad Bartram should split at 130; senior Ben Kreucher is a veteran at 135, and Richard Wentworth and Kian O'Donoghue can fill in either class.

By staff writer Paul Beaudry

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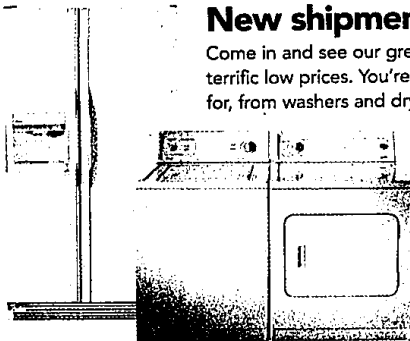
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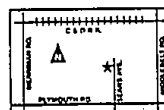
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