

UVSC grapplers seeking solid ground



Wolverines have only 3 seniors, a junior on roster

By Jason Adkins

For the Deseret Morning News

OREM — UVSC wrestling starts its fifth season and unlike the challenges that most schools face in rebuilding every year, the Wolverines are just trying to get the program on solid footing.

"With a team like this, most would consider us to be rebuilding," said coach Greg Williams. "We are really in a building year."

That building is evident still as UVSC has only three seniors and one junior on the roster of 27.

"We have approached this year as a two-year project," Williams said.

That means that while wins and losses still gauge how well the team is doing, it doesn't necessarily translate to the progression of the program because of all the new talent.

Senior leadership is on hand though to at least help the new guys out. Marc Fenwick is one of those and prepares to lead the Wolverines in either the 157- or 174-pound weight class and is looking to improve on a 16-17 record last year (9-9 in dual meets).

The youngsters will also get a chance to compete right off the bat. Ben Kjar (125 pounds) took time off for an LDS mission, but before the two-year break from the sport, he took home three straight high school championships at Viewmont.

"He hasn't had a chance to establish himself yet," Williams said of Kjar.

Gehrhart Vuksinick gets his chance after redshirting last season, and his presence has already paid dividends. Vuksinick placed fourth in the 165-pound division last weekend at the Eastern Michigan Open that featured some of the top schools in the country.

Boise State transfer Jeff Newby also plans on making noise at the 145-pound level in coming back to Utah. Prepping at Box Elder, Newby won four straight high school state titles and is looking to improve on the 11-16 record he posted last year while a



Wolverine Marc Fenwick, right, is one of the team's senior leaders and is looking to improve on a 16-17 record last year.

CHAD CLARK

Bronco.

With UVSC having the only collegiate wrestling program in the state, Williams has the luxury of getting the first dibs on the best recruits in the area and also money from the wrestling community.

"The fact that we are the only college program in the state allows us to have the focus put on us," Williams said.

A dedicated practice facility and the ability to hire on more coaches are some of the tangible benefits that the team has received recently.

"We have two assistants paid for because the community has stepped up," Williams said.

Williams isn't concerned about any pressure to perform with the money and resources pouring in. In fact, he is planning ahead for when UVSC can compete at nationals and believes some of his wrestlers would have a shot next season if they were allowed to do so.

"By the end of next year if we did go to nationals, we'd have a chance to place," Williams said.

UVSC wrestling at a glance

What to look for: Team is still building in its fifth year of competition. Coach Greg Williams has a two-year plan in mind for squad.

Familiar faces: Senior Marc Fenwick (157/174 pounds) is standout returnee who went 16-17 last year and comes into this season as the team's captain.

Newcomer who could star: Freshman Ben Kjar has plenty of talent, and if he can come back from two years away from wrestling while serving an LDS mission, Kjar will turn heads.

Local connections: Jeb Clark (soph., 165/174) won two state titles at Spanish Fork and helped lead the Dons to two team titles. Gehrhart Vuksinick (Fr., 157) placed second at state in his senior year at Pleasant Grove and went 34-2 his senior year.

Upcoming meets and matches

Saturday — Cowboy Open, Laramie, Wyo.
 Nov. 17 — Jack Hancock Invitational, Golden, Colo.
 Nov. 18 — Northern Colorado Open, Greeley, Colo.
 Nov. 30-Dec. 1 — Las Vegas Invitational
 Dec. 15 — at UC Davis
 Dec. 19 — Reno Tournament of Champions
 Jan. 3 — vs. South Dakota State, Orem
 Jan. 8 — Lone Star Duals (vs. Brown, Eastern Michigan, Oklahoma City and Wisconsin), South Grand Prairie, Texas
 Jan. 12 — Utah Valley Open, Orem, Utah
 Jan. 25 — at Air Force and vs. Colorado School of Mines, Colorado Springs, Colo.
 Jan. 26 — Tracy Borah Duals, Gunnison, Colo.
 Jan. 28 — vs. North Dakota State, Orem
 Feb. 8 — at Northern Colorado, Greeley
 Feb. 9 — at Wyoming, Laramie
 Feb. 15 — vs. Mesa State, Orem
 Feb. 18 — vs. Portland State, Orem