

# Gibney qualifies for state wrestling

By Rongi Yost  
Correspondent

The Outlaws took 15 wrestlers to the 4A Regional Wrestling Tournament on Friday and Saturday, February 13-14, at Cascade High School. Twelve teams were represented, and after the two-day battle Sweet Home earned the top spot with 359 points. Cascade finished second at 311, and North Marion was third at 217. Sisters finished 10th.

The top four placers in each weight class qualified to compete in the Oregon Wrestling State Championships on February 27 and 28.

Mitch Gibney (195 pounds) earned a fourth-place finish in a tough-fought match and is the only Outlaw who earned a trip to the state championships.

Coach John Downs told *The Nugget* that Gibney muscled his way through the season and won 90 percent of his matches with strength and speed — but he needed to work on his cardio.

“The last couple of weeks, Mitch stepped it up in practices and concentrated heavily on conditioning and specific move repetition to build up his muscle memory on some of his favorite moves,” stated Downs. “His efforts showed up this weekend.”

Gibney won his first two matches with pins in the first round and dominated in both matches, but realized that

soon he would have to face the No. 1-seeded wrestler, senior Matt Engholm from Elmira, who holds a season record of 31-5.

Mitch met Engholm in the semi-final match and, according to Downs, it was one of Gibney’s best matches of the year.

“It was tough-fought but Engholm, as a senior, had just a little more experience with moves and was able to counter Gibney’s efforts and beat him 10-2 at the end of the final round,” said Downs.

With the loss, Gibney moved into the consolation bracket and fought through. Gibney pinned Gabryl Pointer from Cascade to earn a spot in the third and fourth place finale against No. 3 seed Tanner Herbert from Cottage Grove.

Downs said, “With the three pins and the three-round battle with Engholm, Mitch’s conditioning was being pushed to the limit.”

With three seconds left in the first round, Herbert was able to catch Mitch in a move and earn the pin before time ran out. Gibney earned a fourth place finish and a berth to the state championships.

“This was the first time in the years I have coached Mitch that I have seen him truly upset and disappointed in himself,” said Downs. “We met in the hall afterward where he almost collapsed from exhaustion, and sat and talked. I shared that

I could see he was upset and frustrated and told him it was because he’d finally found the drive, desire and true commitment to be a champion ... a wrestler.”

Gibney wasn’t the only Outlaw who had a successful weekend. Junior Mark Fish and Freshman Cole Pade also placed at the tournament.

Pade (113 pounds) won his first match with a pin, and then faced the No. 1-seeded wrestler Kobe Olson (40-5 record) of Sweet Home in his second match.

“Cole was a true Outlaw,” said Downs. “There was no way he was going to allow Olson to pin him. Luckily, Pade is a cross-country runner, because the match went all three rounds. Olson was able to beat Cole 16-1. Cole was pretty proud of how well he did and he took that confidence to the consolation rounds.”

Pade won his next two matches and then lost in a 9-6 decision to Rostocil from North Marion, which sent him to the fifth- and sixth-place match. Pade went all three rounds with Derek Blake from Yamhill-Carlton and won 12-8 in a close match. With the win, Cole was able to challenge the fourth-place winner, Derek Estrada from North Marion, for a shot to still go to state.

Again, Pade went three rounds, but Estrada was just able to out-score Cole 6-1. “I told Cole he was the



PHOTO PROVIDED

Mark Fish, Mitch Gibney, and Cole Pade have wrestled strong for the Outlaws this season.

hardest-working wrestler on the Outlaws team this weekend,” said Downs. “He fought back constantly, except the first round where he pinned his opponent. Cole wrestled every match to three rounds and did not give up a pin. That was very impressive. Cole is always showing his endurance and determination.”

Fish (170 pounds) also showed determination and fortitude. Mark pinned his first opponent of the tournament and then ran into No. 4-seeded Levi Hanson of Elmira, and lost the match.

“Mark didn’t let the loss affect his desire to continue to win and prove to everyone that he was a great wrestler,” said Downs.

Fish fought hard through the consolation rounds and pinned his next two opponents, which gave him a chance to reach the placing rounds. Mark faced No. 5-seeded Tim Volner from Junction City.

“The Junction City senior was a tough match for Fish,” said Downs. “Mark lost the

match, but he was doing very well and feeling great. He told me just before his final match that the last two wins helped him break through the mental block of losing, and he was going to continue to wrestle the best he could, win or lose. I was very proud of Mark for overcoming this hurdle and witnessing his growth to that next step in becoming a great wrestler.”

Fish ended the tourney with a sixth-place finish.

“Mark didn’t just finish sixth out of a 16-wrestler-bracket where his opponents all out-weighted him, but he also worked through a mental demon that had haunted him in the past and now is no longer there.

“Our goal was to finish in the top 10 and have at least one or two wrestlers qualify for state, and we did just that,” said Downs.

Gibney will head to the state championships, which will be held at the Memorial Coliseum in Portland on Friday and Saturday, February 27 and 28.

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