

Matmen compete well at Oregon Wrestling Classic

By Rongi Yost
Correspondent

Sisters' wrestling squad traveled to compete at the prestigious Oregon Wrestling Classic (OWC) on Friday and Saturday, January 13-14 — and they performed well against challenging competition.

The OWC is held at the Redmond Expo Center and is an event that usually draws over 95 high school teams from around the state. Due to the severe weather conditions around the state several teams canceled and the tournament had to be restructured. Round-robin tournaments were set up, and a new bracket was set up to include 6A, 5A, 4A schools, and another for the 3A, 2A, and 1A schools.

The 4A Outlaws realized they would have to face some very tough competition.

Coach John Downs said, "I told the team it was time to step up and represent what type of team we have built here at Sisters. And boy did we!"

Right out of the gates the Outlaws faced 5A Springfield in a tough opening match, and only lost by one point in a final score of 37-36. Freshman Ethan Martin (182 pounds) pinned his opponent in 3:51 and senior Tyler Surface (285 pounds), in his first match of the season, got a pin in 1:56. Surface just returned to the squad after recovering from a knee injury at the start of the season, and the team is excited to have him back.

Sisters boasts a full line-up this year, and as a result

earned several points from forfeits.

Sisters took on Ridgeview in their next contest. The Outlaws were ready after their match, with Springfield, and dominated the Ravens 63-12. Sophomore Dalton Ford (113 pounds) had a barn-burner match and at the end of three rounds defeated his opponent 15-12. Freshmen Anthony Randolph (132 pounds) juniors Cole Pade (138 pounds), Damien Wills (145 pounds), and freshman Sal Gibney (170 pounds) all pinned their opponents in the first round.

To close out the first day, the Outlaws matched up against 6A powerhouse South Medford (SM). Downs said the outcome was a tough one to swallow as the match ended in a 42-42 tie, and due to the tie criteria, SM won the match. Outstanding matches included Ford, who pinned his opponent in 5:13, and repeat winner Wills, who got the pin in 1:57.

Sisters returned the next day and faced Phoenix, a very tough southern Oregon school. The Outlaws received a few forfeits from the Pirates and earned a few wins, but in the end the Pirates came out on top 40-33. Junior Jake Stevens controlled his three-round match, and won 7-0. Wills and Martin both pinned their opponents in the second round of their matches.

The Outlaws faced 3A repeat state champions Burns in their second match of the day. Sisters prevailed in a close 43-42 victory. Wills recorded his fourth win of the tournament when he pinned his opponent in 1:39. Junior

Dustin Smith also crushed his opponent in the first round with a pin in 1:46.

"The Outlaws were just starting to warm up, and it was exciting to see them continue to still fight hard on the second day," said Downs.

The final match of the tournament was against a super-tough 5A Hood River Valley (HRV) squad, who took the match 48-30. Repeat winners Gibney and Martin won both of their matches, and junior Casey Warburton (220 pounds) stepped up, dominated play against his opponent, and got the pin in 2:46.

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— Coach John Downs

"It wasn't looking good at first with our lighter, younger wrestlers losing tough matches, but the bigger weights for the Outlaws kept the duel close," said Downs.

In addition to the boys, the Outlaws had one high school girl compete at the event. Freshman Vickie Hooks entered the girls' individual



PHOTO PROVIDED

Coach John Downs and freshman wrestler Vickie Hooks.

championship matches.

Hook didn't start to wrestle until late evening, and according to Downs her first match was an eye-opener. Hook faced a very experienced Malea Maleak from Thurston High School and was pinned in the first round. Hook entered the consolation round and in the first round pinned Emily Mitchell from Hood River in two minutes. Vickie also tallied wins over Nicolette Irvine and Marina Taccone, both from Ashland. Her three wins earned her a spot in the third- and fourth-place match, where she again had to face Palahnuick of

Thurston, and lost in a very tough match.

"The team, her parents, and I were very proud of Vickie earning fourth place out of 13 girls," said Downs. "Vickie now realizes even more how much harder she needs to work in practice."

Downs told *The Nugget* that he was very impressed with how the entire Outlaws team fought both days of the event.

The Outlaws were to wrestle against Sweet Home at home in Sisters on Tuesday, January 17. On Saturday, January 21, the Outlaws will travel to the Madras Invite.

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For information, contact Zeta Seiple at 541-549-6157 or Paul Alan Bennett at 541-588-0156.