

Cougars relive 1989, place third

Kayla Calloway

The Clackamas Print

Eight wrestlers, two days and one national title, all add up to a spectacular weekend for the Cougars in Minnesota.

This past weekend, Clackamas Cougars traveled up to Rochester, Minnesota, for the NJCAA National Championships with eight of their finest and highest ranked ready to compete and take home the third place title, the best finish for the team since 1989. Tyrell Fortune (285) brought back the national title in his weight class.

Kyle Wirkuty (141), Anthony Weerheim (149), Jace Lewis (157), Kris Spencer (165), Josh Miller (174), Caleb Kociemba (184), Brett Sanchez (197), and the Tank, Tyrell Fortune, were all nationally ranked after the regionals in Idaho earlier last month.

Incredible is the only word that can even come close to describing the tournament. The team did their best, and their efforts were paid off in full. After the first day, the team was firmly in fourth place, and the title was in their reach.

"We came back Friday night pumped," said head coach, Josh Rhoden.

Saturday morning, the team slipped into second place, but unfortunately was booted out by the team's rival, North Idaho. It was a close call, with the difference only being 2.5 points.

During that fateful placing match, the coaches from both teams had counted the points. Rhoden was positive that the only way the other team could win was if their wrestler pinned his opponent. His hopes were high, and



The 2009 Clackamas wrestling team placed third in the country at the NJCAA National Wrestling Championships in Rochester, Minn. on Feb. 28. Top Row (from left to right): Coach Josh Rhoden, Assistant Coach Brett Born, Brett Sanchez, Tyrell Fortune, Kris Spencer, Caleb Kociemba, Josh Miller, Assistant Coach Oscar Frias, Athletic Trainer Kevin Arizo. Bottom Row (from left to right): Kyle Wirkuty, Anthony Weerheim, Jace Lewis.

although North Idaho managed to scrape by, Rhoden is more than pleased by the outcome.

"The guys wrestled awesome," he said.

This slight didn't deter the team from celebrating with family

and friends at Outback Steakhouse Saturday night, with the high of winning still coursing through them.

They had a lot to celebrate in addition to the titles they had earned. Fortune, Wirkuty,

Kociemba, Spencer, and Sanchez took home the title of All-American. The team also has the third-highest G.P.A. in the nation.

"The flight back was kinda quiet," said Rhoden with a grin permanently plastered on his face.

"I think the guys stayed enjoying themselves."

The whole season was great, and the titles are on the cake.

"It's been a blessing with these kids," said Rhoden.



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