



Grant Union wrestling team positioned for success

13 girls on the roster create new opportunities

By Angel Carpenter
Blue Mountain Eagle

The 2A Grant Union Prospector wrestling team, with 21 boys and 13 girls, is busy working drills and preparing for the tough schedule ahead.

With several new wrestlers, Andy Lusco, in his eighth year as the Prospector head coach, reminded the team they need to work through their sore muscles and pain with mental toughness.

"We have 34 kids here, and 20 are new," he said. "When you get kids like that, it's learning to retrain the brain. This is very difficult. They're to be commended for sticking with it."

Lusco has three assistant coaches with Tye Parsons returning, and Donny Speakman and Andy's wife, Angie Lusco, also lending a hand.

The breakdown

Senior Drew Lusco, wrestling in the 285-pound heavyweight bracket, had a second-place finish in the state championship final round last year as a junior, falling to a Central Linn senior by 1 penalty point. Drew Lusco was state champion in 2017, during his sophomore year.

Senior Russell Hodge qualified for state after placing second (182) at the Special District 4 tournament in Halfway. He was just shy of making the podium, placing fifth at state.

Senior Damion Young, sophomore Justin Hodge and sophomore Ethan Moore, who made the podium at last year's district tournament, are also expected to be major contenders this year. Moore qualified for state his freshman year.

Girls team

Last season was a one for the record books for the girls.

Trinity Hutchison, who graduated in June, won the championship title in the 155-pound bracket, and Arionna Young, as a freshman last year, had a second-place finish, wrestling at 115.

The girls had their work cut out for them, competing with other females in 1A-6A class schools, and that will be the case again this season.

Two girls are returning to the mats, junior Sophie Brockway and sophomore Ashley Henry. The team has more than doubled their numbers, growing from six wrestlers to 13.

Season outlook

The coach mentioned five wrestlers from the boys team expected to be major contenders this season.

"Drew is in the hunt for trying to win the championship," Andy Lusco said. "I think he's pretty motivated."

Russell Hodge — "Looking to see improvement there."

The other threats, Damion Young, Justin Hodge and Ethan Moore, are also expected to perform well.

"Justin is one of the best in the state," coach Lusco said. "We just need to get him out of districts. We



Grant Union Prospector senior Drew Lusco wrestles junior Quinten Hallgarth in the team's Dec. 5 practice.



Samantha Floyd, Megan McManama, Fallen Bolman, Frank Douglass, Damion Young, Drew Lusco, Russell Hodge

have a tough district."

There are other team members also making a statement on the mats.

The biggest challenge among the district competition is the Culver Bulldogs.

"Culver is a perennial challenge," Andy Lusco said. "They had a total of 11 qualifiers for state in 2A last season."

The seniors

There are seven seniors this season, four boys with experience and three girls who are new to the program.

Drew Lusco, who was district champion last season, said his goal is to become state champion again. He said missing the title last year was disappointing, but he's ready to increase his skills and conditioning to take on the challenge this season.

"You have to want to win," he said. "Usually the guy who wants to win the most wins."

Russell Hodge, second at the district meet last season, said he might have a better chance this year since it appears his major contenders have graduated.

"My goal is to place first in state," he said. "When I practice, I think of my competitors practicing, and I try to work harder than they would."

Damion Young, who has been wrestling for six years and currently wrestles at 160, said he hopes to qualify for state.

"I'm going to have a good partner (in practice), and he's going to push me, and I'm going to push him to work hard," he said.

Frank Douglass said his goal is to push himself to go as far as he can this season by staying focused and asking for assistance when needed.

"The coach gives orders, and I follow them," he said. "I hope to get a few wins."

Fallen Bolman is new to the sport, but she's been the team's

statistician for the past three years.

She said she's found the team to be welcoming and the coach "super helpful."

Bolman said she'll be "trying to remember everything that I've learned and not letting 'myself' get me — keep my mind in the game."

Both Megan McManama and Samantha Floyd said they've been wanting to join the team the last few years.

"It's a lot of work and it's hard, but it's worth it," McManama said. "You start as strangers but leave with a family."

Floyd said she didn't have the confidence to join until she saw the team had grown. She hadn't played a sport since middle school, so just getting through the first day of warmups was a win, she said.

"I've learned that I'm capable of much more than I thought I was," she said. "I want to encourage others."

Andy Lusco said that girls wrestling is growing at a pretty fast rate statewide.

"We're seeing more than half the other teams have at least one girl," he said. "I think it's going to grow. They've doubled their opponents this year, and that means twice as many will be going to state. There are no divisions for girls who wrestle at state, so they compete with other girls in 1A through 6A. The divisions will eventually come."

He added, "Most of the girls are new, but 13 girls working hard is awesome, and it's fun to coach them."

Looking at the season ahead, coach Lusco is known for pushing the basics.

"Conditioning and working on fundamentals," he said.

The team gathered in a large circle around assistant coach Parsons as he demonstrated a drill with freshman Jack Strong. Then the team — filling the Grant Union old gym on the mats — paired up

GRANT UNION 2019-2020 WRESTLING SCHEDULE

Dec. 20-21: Boys @ Elgin Tournament, TBD

Dec. 21: Girls @ Liberty Tournament, TBD

Jan. 4: Both @ Riverside Tournament, TBD

Jan. 11: Both @ Echo Tournament, TBD

Jan. 17-18: Both @ Oregon Classic in Redmond, TBD

Jan. 23: Boys @ Baker, Mac-Hi in Baker, TBD

Jan. 24: Both host Grant Union Tournament, TBD

Jan. 24: Both @ Hood River Tournament, TBD

Jan. 28: Boys @ Crane, Burns in Crane, TBD

Feb. 1: Boys @ Heppner Tournament, TBD

Feb. 7-8: Girls @ Girls Districts in Springfield, TBD

Feb. 8: Boys @ Pine Eagle Tournament in Halfway, TBD

Feb. 14-15: Both @ Special District 4 Tournament in Union

Feb. 28-29: Both @ State Tournament in Portland

and went to work.

Parsons is also the head coach for the Grant County Wrestling Club with 54 team members from ages 4-15.

Coach Lusco said more club members will move through that program and up to the high school level.

"We're keeping the program alive — that was the goal, to have a good program for kids who've been wrestling since they were 4," he said. "The best kids are club kids."

He said wrestling as a club sport is popular statewide, including in Eastern Oregon — Pendleton, Baker City, Burns, Prineville, Joseph are just a few.

"We've got to get there to meet those teams on equal footing," he said.

Grant Union wrestlers compete in Culver

Blue Mountain Eagle

Grant Union Prospector Drew Lusco placed first (4-0) at the Culver Invitational in the 285-pound bracket with wins by fall over Shain Beymer of Madras and Jacob Washington of Sisters and by decision over Michael Heutzenroeder of La Pine and Daniel Underwood of La Pine.

At 160, Justin Hodge (5-1) placed third with wins over Leander Smith of Madras, Harley Miller of Joseph/Wallowa, Craig Puckett of North Lake, Scotty Metcalf of Gold Beach and Dylan Hankey of La Pine. He lost in the semifinals to Ray Solis of Crook County.

Also at 160, Damion Young (4-2) placed fifth with wins over Connor Fowler of Ridgeview, Tom Kallenbach of Madras, Jose Orozco of La Pine and Scotty Metcalf of Gold Beach. He lost to Hunter Augustynovich of Culver in the semifinals and Dylan Hankey of La Pine.

At 182, Russell Hodge (4-2) placed fourth with wins over Andreas Mendez of Culver, Isaac Andres of Culver, Landen Roggenkamp of La Pine and Cade Wynne of Mazama. He lost to Ethan Richards of Mazama in the quarterfinals and again in the third-place match.

Dan Henry went 0-2 at 106. Ezra Beam went 0-2 and placed fourth at 113. Dylan Clark went 0-2 at 126. Ben Henry went 1-2 at 132. Riddick Hutchison went 1-2 and 138. Jack Strong went 1-2 at 145. Isaac Koopman went 2-2 at 152. Sam McCracken went 0-2 at 152. Frank Douglass went 3-2 at 160. Quentin Hallgarth went 2-2 at 170. Tucker Carpenter went 0-2 at 170. Rylan Cox went 2-2 at 285.

Grant Union girls

Ashley Henry (3-0) placed first at 122 with wins by fall over Aubby Hill of Glide, Ariana Hill of Glide and Kylee Boynton of Madras.

Mercedes Locke (2-1) placed second at 156 with wins over Oriana Foltz of Madras and Ronne Puterbaugh of Ridgeview after a first-round loss to Peyton Dennis of Madras.

Abby Lusco (2-1) placed second at 179 with wins by fall over Belen Leonard of Ridgeview and by forfeit over Megan McManama of Grant Union. She lost in the second round to Anastasia Kuglar of Mazama.

Ashleigh Ostberg (2-1) placed second at 195 with wins by forfeit over Fallen Bollman of Grant Union and by decision over Si Imas Fry of Gold Beach. She lost in the first round to Ashlyn Dennis of Madras.

Kristin Cantrell (1-1) placed second at 232 with a win over Natalie Shaw of Glide. She lost to Monique Hansen of Mazama.

Megan McManama went 0-3 at 179 for fourth place. Fallen Bollman went 0-3 at 195 for fourth place.

SPORTS ROUNDUP

Grant Union girls victorious over Umatilla

The 2A Grant Union girls won in overtime 38-37 on Dec. 13 over the 3A Umatilla Vikings at the Columbia River Clash.

"It was a good learning experience this weekend, and it was some of our best basketball this season," said head coach Kristi Moore. "We learned a lot about energy levels and working together and putting what we practiced into game time."

Another key factor that led to the win was excellent teamwork from the girls and doing well at the free throw line.

The girls lost to the Irrigon Knights 34-59 on Dec. 12, and to the Nixyaawii Golden Eagles 43-31 on Dec. 14, but they learned how to maintain energy levels and to continue working together for future games.

The Grant Union girls are scheduled to play in Burns on Dec. 19 at 6 p.m.

Ukiah/Long Creek boys notch victories, while injuries prevent girls from playing

The Ukiah/Long Creek Mountain Lion boys basketball team is bouncing back with back-to-back wins this past week.

The Mountain Lions inched a 63-60 win over Helix on Friday in the Arlington Snowball Tournament. Head coach Amos Studtmann said the team is learning to be patient and playing high-intensity defense.

Ukiah/Long Creek continued the tournament with a 53-47 win over Dayville/Monument.

"It was close at the end," Studtmann said. "One of our tall players — rim protectors, rebounders — got hurt and had to sit the last four and a half minutes of the game. Ultimately, I think the game came down to fouls. We made a lot of free throws. The team got a lot of assists as well."

The boys are scheduled to com-

pete at Griswold High School on Dec. 20-21 for the Helix Holiday Tournament.

"We have a positive outlook for the season," the coach said. "We're never complacent or satisfied with where we are. We want to grow and improve."

The girls team has only played once this year, hampered by injuries, but Studtmann said the team has enough players for the tournament this weekend.

"Obviously, it's stressful and frustrating not knowing if you're going to have enough to start the next game, but it's encouraging to see them stepping up and being strong for each other," he said. "I'm proud of them for being willing to play. They're playing and practicing hard without knowing how the season is going to go."

Studtmann said there are six girls on the roster, but one will be in Alaska this weekend, leaving only five for the games. One returner

from last year's team plans to play in her first game of the year after missing the first due to injury.

The girls are scheduled to face Griswold at 6 p.m. Friday in Helix.

Panther boys continue winning streak at Badger Tournament

The Prairie City Panther boys basketball team won 58-31 against the Bickelton, Washington, Pirates at the Badger Tournament Dec. 13 in North Powder. The momentum carried the Panthers into their next game on Dec. 14 against the St. Paul Buckaroos. Prairie City won 61-55 and extended their win streak to three.

The Panthers are scheduled to play in Burns at 6 p.m. Dec. 19.

Panther girls split wins in Idaho

The Prairie City Panther girls basketball team won against the Council, Idaho, Lumberjacks 35-21 on Friday, Dec. 16. The Pan-

thers lost their next game against the Tri-Valley, Idaho, Dawgs. Tri-Valley won the game 43-13.

Dec. 20 Prairie City will face Sherman in Moro at 4:30 p.m. On Dec. 21, the Panthers will face 5A Hood River Valley's junior varsity.

Grant Union boys lose two at Columbia River Clash

The 2A Grant Union Prospector boys lost against two 3A schools over the weekend after a win Thursday at the Columbia River Clash in Umatilla.

On Dec. 12, the Prospectors beat Irrigon, 54-42.

On Dec. 13, the Prospectors faced the Umatilla Vikings and narrowly lost 46-49.

The next day, Grant Union faced the Riverside Pirates and lost 53-38. Grant Union is scheduled to play in Burns on Dec. 19 at 7 p.m. and then at the Willamina Tournament on Dec. 20-21. These are the last three non-league games scheduled for the season.