

Wrestling places five at Invite

Bulldogs finish seventh out of 13 teams at Simpson Invitational

BY CORY WEEKES
Staff Reporter

At the Simpson Invitational last weekend, the wrestling team hoped to answer some of the questions it was left with after a disappointing UNO Open on Nov. 21. Unfortunately for the Bulldogs, they once again were unable to catch their stride.

While the Simpson Invite didn't go as well as the team had hoped, there was one bright spot, coming from freshman Colton Schmitz. He finished fourth in the tournament and bolstered his record to 8-5 overall. Schmitz is on pace for one of the best records for a true freshman in years.

Others who placed last weekend were seniors Loyde Braidlow and Dean Schultz. Schultz had a hot start but had to withdraw from the tournament because of an injury.

Schmitz went 4-2 in the tournament, losing to the No. 1 wrestler in the 141 weight class by a score of 7-3. He went on to lose in the third-place match 4-2.

"Had a few points gone his way, Colton wins that tournament," head coach Dave Schutter said.

Schmitz however, remains focused on getting better.

"The tournament went OK," Schmitz said. "I felt pretty strong and lost a couple tough matches but all in all it wasn't bad. I'm getting smarter and learning to get a lead



Freshman Ryan Banning (right) earned fourth place at the Simpson Invitational on Saturday. He was one of five Bulldogs who placed at the event. Truman wrestles against Hannibal LaGrange tonight at home.

Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index

quick and keep it."

Schmitz recognized that the team as a whole still isn't wrestling to its ability.

"We have a talented team, but we just didn't wrestle as well as we could have," Schmitz said. "There were some pretty good teams, so there were no easy matches. It was just another tough tournament."

Because the wrestling team has such a long season, Schutter said you can't really focus

too much on these early tournaments.

"There is still a lot of wrestling to be done and a lot of learning left," Schutter said.

Despite its showing in each of the last two tournaments, Schutter said there is one thing the team has right.

"The team's work ethic has been the real difference from a lot of the other teams I've coached," Schutter said. "We didn't wrestle

to the best of our ability. There isn't any one thing that we can pin our troubles on. We did everything we could but just lost some close ones. You don't win national championships in December."

Injuries, thus far, have plagued the team and have already kept team leaders like Braidlow and junior Andy Bader out of competition in earlier tournaments. Schutter said this is one of the main reasons the last couple of weeks have been

so rough.

"We are working with what we have right now," Schutter said. "But some guys just aren't clicking on all cylinders right now. We have some guys nicked up and it will take time for everyone to get on track."

The team will have its first home duel meet against Hannibal-LaGrange College at 7 p.m. today. Schutter said this will be a chance for the team to get back on track.

"It should be a good duel," Schutter said. It's a chance for us to get back into action, and it's always nice to give the community and fans a chance to come out and see us in action."

The real test, however, lies ahead this weekend at the Nebraska-Kearney Open. Like the UNO Open, Nebraska-Kearney attracts many Div. I schools as well as a host of All-Americans.

"If you can place in the top eight in this tournament, you're well on your way to nationals" Schutter said. "The Kearney Open is going to be a real challenge. It's really tough, but our young guys are fighters and with some experience, can be real threats."

Coming off of a seventh-place finish at Simpson, Braidlow hoped to get back on track after missing the UNO Open because of "slight dings."

A good showing at Kearney from Braidlow could help the team in the last tournament before the end of the semester.

"We just have to keep working hard and making the most of every day," Braidlow said. This week is a big week for us."



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Freshman Ryan Schmitz finished in fourth place at the Simpson Invitational on Saturday, and has an 8-5 record.

Schmitz takes fourth at Simpson

BY BRENDAN O'BRIEN
Staff Reporter

College is a big adjustment for anyone, and being an athlete makes it even more difficult. Freshman wrestler Colton Schmitz's 8-5 record, which includes a second-place finish and two fourth-place finishes at tournaments, suggests there have been few speed bumps in his transition. Schmitz said he is happy but not satisfied.

"I knew it was going to be tough," Schmitz said. "I still don't feel like I'm doing that great, just because I'm used to breezing through high school."

Schmitz finished fourth in the Simpson Invitational on Saturday, the top finish for the 'Dogs.

Head coach Dave Schutter said that despite an athlete's early success, the transition from high school to college represents a major challenge.

"If you brought in 100 two-time state champions, only one would be able to make the transition," Schutter said. "People don't realize how huge it is, and just because a kid is really successful in high school doesn't mean he will be in college. [Colton's] handling the transition well. He has highs and lows.

"I guarantee there's times he's thought about, 'Man, I don't know if this is for me,' and there's times he's thought, 'Man, I can be a national champion.'"

Each time he takes the mat to compete, he wrestles for more than himself. Schmitz is a Kirksville native, and he said being the hometown favorite means more is expected.

"They don't really know how much tougher college is than high school," Schmitz said. "They might expect me to do a lot better, but I don't feel a lot of pressure."

One challenge that Schmitz cannot escape is the need to maintain specific weights, which sometimes requires athletes to drop several pounds within a week or single day.

"It's pretty tough because let's say I've got to make weight or something the next day," Schmitz said. "I almost have to put that ahead of school even though school is more important and I know that. It's pretty tough, but luckily I've been doing it for long enough that I've got a little system going."

Schmitz's preparation and work ethic were evident when he earned fourth at the Simpson Invite despite the fact he was the No. 8 seed. He lost to the eventual champion

in the second-round match but won his next three, one of which was a come-from-behind 10-7 win in overtime, to move on to the third-place match.

After a hard-fought battle, he fell 4-2 to finish fourth. Schmitz said the key to his success throughout the day was his ability to remain patient and not force anything. Schutter added that, with a few more months of training, he could have beaten the ultimate winner in the quarterfinals and possibly won the tournament.

"He was beating the kid in the first period and then kind of let the kid come back and take the match from him, but that's the experience thing," Schutter said. "He's getting better every time."

Schmitz has set his sights high. His personal goals are to wrestle at nationals and ultimately be an All-American. These are lofty goals, especially for a freshman, but Schutter said that is precisely what he wants.

"There's no reason to be here if you don't [have high goals]," Schutter said. "You can only set a person on the path to be an All-American or national champion — that comes from inside him. Right now, he's got the heart of a champion and desire to get better."

Athlete of the Week

Colton Schmitz

Sport: Wrestling
Year: Freshman
Hometown: Kirksville, Mo.

Colton Schmitz finished fourth at the Simpson Invitational on Saturday. Schmitz worked his way from the No. 8 seed to finish the highest of any Bulldog. Schmitz has an 8-5 record this season, including a second-place finish at the Loras College Open on Nov. 7.

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