

By Jan Schultz

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Finishing the 2008-09 wrestling season with nine athletes pushed some of the younger Longhorns into varsity roles in the last half of the schedule.

Those younger wrestlers may not have won a lot of matches, but Coach Matt Vlasin says that experience will be good for next year's squad.

Chase County finished the season with three seniors, one junior, four sophomores and a freshman after injuries and a family move took three wrestlers out of competition.

Keithan Cochran, one of the sophomores, missed just the last two meets at Southwest and districts, after a late season injury. He had wrestled every match up to that point.

Jesse Ferebee, another sophomore, was injured in an accident, and freshman Jared Knobbe broke an arm at the Ogallala meet. Junior Cole Crider's family moved, again affecting the numbers.

Vlasin said the younger wrestlers like Cody Cravey, Joel Fisher and Trevor Fuehrer moved into varsity competition, gaining some valuable experience for next year.

"Yes, our numbers were down, but the up side is we'll have a good group back next year, and everyone got varsity matches in," Vlasin said.

Consequently, Vlasin said he saw a big improvement over the year, especially with the younger athletes.

"That's what you hope for with a younger team," he said.

Another thing you hope for, he said, is that the senior members of the team make it to state. All three of them did.

Jeremy Mathews, Sean Langin and Justin Lueth represented Chase County at the state meet, Feb. 19-21 in Omaha. Mathews returned with a fourth place medal at 171 lbs. in Class C.

A look at the season stats shows Mathews finished with the best record on the team at 36-7. Fellow senior Justin Lueth had the next best record, not far behind, at 32-9.

Mathews collected the most pins this season with 25. Next in line was Cochran with 14.

Justin Lueth also led the team in takedowns this season with 72.

Again looking to next year, Vlasin said he's hoping for three or four wrestlers, currently in the junior high program, to move into high school wrestling.

Vlasin also indicated he's interested in another season as head coach next year.