By Jan Schultz
The Imperial Republican

While eight wrestlers are far from a full team on the high school level, Chase County Coach Matt Vlasin is happy with this year's numbers.

After all, it's double last year's high school wrestling numbers when just four donned the Longhorn wrestling uniform.

The Longhorn season kicks off tonight (Thursday) when the Longhorn wrestlers travel to their annual opener—a double dual in Oshkosh against Garden County and Bridgeport.

Chase County will wrestle the first two duals of the night, starting at 5:30 p.m. against Garden County followed by their dual versus Bridgeport.

That will be followed by Saturday's Broken Bow Invitational, their first tournament of the season. That varsity/JV tournament will start at 8:30 a.m. MT

"We're ready," said Coach Vlasin.

A couple of the wrestlers are back after a couple years away from the sport, Vlasin said, so there are some unknowns.

However, he feels good about the team's conditioning heading into the season opener. Along with reviewing the basics of the sport, conditioning has been the focus at practice since the first day Nov. 12.

Based on where he thinks his wrestlers will be in the weight classes, the Longhorn team will probably be open at six weights when all eight are competing, he said.

That means it will be difficult to place as a team again this season. Instead, they will be working toward individual medal placement.

"We have a lot of solid kids with talent, but it will be hard to make up those points for team totals," he said.

And, that's if all of them are there without the added effect from injuries or other activities. Two of the wrestlers for sure won't be at the Broken Bow meet due to conflicts and/or other reasons.

However, Vlasin said eight wrestlers out this year are more than he initially expected. And, he is anticipating that number will continue to climb, based on interest at the junior high level.

Here are this year's team members broken down by class with their anticipated weight class:
Seniors—Michael May (138).
Juniors—David Almanza (132), Kris Kuhlmann (152), Luis Rodriguez (220).
Sophomores—Jake Lueth (145), Johnathan Fegley (132).
Freshmen—Caleb Bubak (113), Hunter Dillan (126).

Several duals dropped

Vlasin said with the exception of Thursday's opener, the Longhorns have no other duals on the schedule this season.

Last year, there were three duals on the schedule.

However, McCook dropped Chase County this year due to low numbers here and Holyoke,

Colo., dropped the Longhorns because they had too many other dates scheduled.

There was a dual scheduled at Fleming, Colo., last year, as well, but it was cancelled due to lack of weights that matched up between the two schools.

To compensate, the Longhorns will compete with their entire varsity team at the Southwest tournament in early February. Previously, Chase County used Southwest as a “makeup meet” for those who missed a tournament earlier in the season.

The only home date for the Longhorn wrestlers will be on Jan. 12 when Chase County hosts its annual tournament.

This year’s SPVA meet will be hosted by North Platte St. Pat’s on Jan. 31.

Districts for Chase County will be at Southern Valley High School Feb. 8-9.