

By Jan Schultz

The Imperial Republican

Sixteen young men fill out the Chase County Schools' Longhorn wrestling roster this season, which is making final preparations for its season opener Thursday night.

Head Coach Matt Vlasin, now in his third year at the helm, said the Longhorns are a bit younger this year, but have "a lot of ambition."

But, the team continues to have good senior and upperclass leadership this year, Vlasin said, after losing six seniors to graduation.

"That's helping push the younger kids," Vlasin said Monday.

The Longhorns are expected to be open at four weights this week as they kick off their season at a double dual with Garden County and Bridgeport tonight (Thursday) in Oshkosh, then travel to the Broken Bow tournament Saturday.

Expected open weights are 112, 119, 125 and 215.

Vlasin said some of that is due to some wrestlers not being at the desired weight yet, and others to academic ineligibility. Later in the season, he said their only open weights should be at 112 and 119.

Since starting practice Nov. 17, Vlasin said they've been concentrating on conditioning and reviewing various wrestling moves, since most have been away from the sport for a year.



The team has been fighting a little sickness, but hasn't been hit hard, Vlasin said.

They've also been relatively injury-free with the exception of Joel Fisher, who broke his wrist late in the football season. He'll be out for another week or two recovering, Vlasin said.

The team has one returning state qualifier from last year, senior Justin Lueth. Other returning letterwinners include Jeremy Mathews, Sean Langin and Cole Crider.

Assisting Vlasin with the coaching duties are returning assistant Skip Kelley and volunteer Rob Lueth.

Here is this year's team listed by class:

Seniors—Jeremy Mathews, Sean Langin, Justin Lueth, Bart Dinnel, Juan Varay.

Juniors—Cole Crider, Tyler Roenfeldt, Andrei Rodriguez.

Sophomores—Nathan Hinojosa, Jeremiah Lueth, Jesse Ferebee, Joel Fisher, Keithan Cochran, Trevor Fuehrer.

Freshmen—Jared Knobbe, Cody Cravey.

One change in the Longhorn wrestling schedule this year is the addition of Maxwell as an SPVA conference team, replacing Garden County. Maxwell will host this year's SPVA tournament Feb. 5, 2009, in North Platte.

Opener at double dual

Chase County will meet Garden County in the first of two duals tonight (Thursday) at 5:30 p.m. in Oshkosh. That opening dual will be followed by the Chase County/Bridgeport match-up.

Vlasin said he'll be taking 13 of his wrestlers to the double dual and Saturday's first tournament of the season in Broken Bow. The team will leave Friday night after practice and stay overnight in Broken Bow.

Wrestling at Broken Bow starts at 8:30 a.m. (MT). Last year, the tournament was postponed

due to snow, and rescheduled for late December.

Besides Chase County and Broken Bow, teams that attended the rescheduled meet last year were Central City, Madison, Ord, St. Paul, Grand Island Central Catholic, High Plains, Holdrege, Southern Valley and Minden.

The Longhorn team underwent the state-mandated hydration and body fat testing two weeks ago, Vlasin noted.

According to the NSAA, the primary purpose of the body fat testing program is to determine the lowest, safe minimum weight for each wrestler. The hydration test is done to keep wrestlers from cutting too much water weight, Vlasin said.