



FOR THE POST/CHARLOTTE BARTZKE

Dallas junior P.J. Precone (rear) is expected to be one of the best 103-pound wrestlers in the Wyoming Valley Conference. He is shown wrestling Lake-Lehman's James Rosencrans during a recent non-conference match.

Dallas looking to repeat

By DAVE KONOPKI
Dallas Post Editor

DALLAS TWP. — Forget about the devastating injuries and the winless exhibition record. The Wyoming Valley Conference wrestling regular season begins this week.

And Division II defending championship Dallas is thinking repeat.

The Mountaineers open defense of their WVC Division II championship when they host GAR at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday in the school gymnasium. Last season, Dallas captured its first wrestling championship in more than 30 years.

But it's been a tough season already for head coach Dan Natitus and the Mountaineers. Three starters, including senior co-captain Kyle Hazleton, suffered season-ending injuries as Dallas lost its first four non-conference matches.

Hazleton shattered his ankle during a practice, requiring seven

pins to be inserted during a subsequent surgery. In addition, sophomore David Fetchko dislocated his elbow and sophomore A.J. Thomas suffered injuries in a car accident.

"We just have to keep working hard in the wrestling room," said Natitus, whose team is participating in the Zephyr Duals at Whitehall High School this weekend. "I have to give credit to our kids. We've been devastated by injuries and they keep working hard. They're not giving up."

Despite the injuries, there's reason for optimism. The Mountaineers return a solid nucleus from last year's team, led by three District 2 Class 2A runners-up. Junior P.J. Precone (103 pounds), sophomore Mitch Artsma (125) and junior Joe Hayes (140) each captured second place at last year's district tournament. And junior Craig Nilsson (215) finished third.

"Each of them has a shot to win a district title this year," said Natitus, a former Dallas standout who begins his third season as

head coach. "They have experience and they're getting better. I think Scott Daube can also make some noise."

Sophomore John Eisenhauer (119), senior Matt Hufford (135), sophomore Darrius Fetchko (130) and senior Nick Appleby (145) also return to the starting lineup for Dallas. And it's the experienced wrestlers who could make the difference in most matches, says Natitus.

"There's no doubt about it, in our biggest matches our better kids are going to need to get six points (a pin)," he said. "That will help make up for our other inexperience."

Although he's focused on this season, Natitus is excited about the future of the Dallas wrestling program. There are almost 30 wrestling competing on the junior high school team — the highest turnout in recent memory, says the coach. And there are almost 60 kids in the Back Mountain Wrestling Club program, most of them residents of the Dallas School Dis-

trict.

"I think we have things moving in the right direction," said Natitus. "We're trying to build on last year's success. This season, the junior high meets are held before the high school meets so I'll be able to watch a lot of them. I think we have a bright future."

But for now, he's anxiously concentrating on the present.

"I can't wait for the start of the (regular) season," said Natitus, whose team competes against GAR, Meyers, Wyoming Area, Tunkhannock, Nanticoke Area and Hanover Area in the division. "We wrestled some very good teams (Hazleton Area, Berwick, Lake-Lehman and Elk Lake) to get ready for our division. Our goal is to win the division. We know there are some good teams, but we feel we have a chance to compete for it. We'll just give it our best shot and see what happens."

Lake-Lehman head coach Phil Lipski did not immediately return telephone messages for this story.

Dunbar scores 21 in DYB girls victory

Ashley Dunbar scored 21 points to lead Diagnostic Imaging to a 29-20 win against Eye Care Specialists in Dallas Youth Basketball's fifth and sixth grade girls action. Jen Yannuzzi added four points, while Kelley Jacobs and Briana Konecke added two points each. Marlee Nelson led Eye Care Specialists with nine points. Allyssa Menzel added six.

3RD/4TH GRADE BOYS

Zach Connolly and Omar Nijmeh each scored six points as Intermountain Health Group edged the Fieldhouse, 12-9, in Dallas Youth Basketball's third and fourth grade boys action. Jacob Ondish was the leading rebounder for the winners. Mikey Shutlock led the scoring for The Fieldhouse while Jesse Kincer and Paul Smith played well defensively.

Jesse Goode scored 12 points and David Simpson and Donald Michalisin added six each to lead Duke's Construction to a 32-10 win against CDI. Stephen Strumski played well defensively for Duke's, while CDI was led by Ray Ostroski's three points. Alex Kurent and Aaron Becker added two points and one point, respectively for CDI.

Chad Phillips scored two points, while Adam Alelman and Nicholas Malkemes played well defensively to lead Intermountain to a 22-16 win against Bishop Photo. Ryan Martin led Bishop Photo with six points. James Flores and Tanner Gattuso added two points each and Daniel Sweeney had several key rebounds.

Allen Fell scored a game-high 20 points and Adam Niznik added eight to lead DJ Charlie Hayes to a 28-20 victory against The Fieldhouse. Daniel Minge played well for Charlie Hayes, while Jonathan Wilson led The Fieldhouse with eight points. Connor Motley played well defensively.

Nick Muldoon scored six points and Jake Archer added

four as Quad Three Group remained undefeated with an 18-6 win against CDI. Andrew Matcho, Jack Tomko, and Joe Bevevino scored two points each for CDI.

Spencer Bowanko scored six points and Eric Pincofski added two as C&C Sheetmetal edged Duke's Construction, 14-12. Christian Wargo was the leading rebounder for C&C, while Jesse Goode scored eight points for Duke's. Donald Michalisin and David Simpson added two each points each for Duke's, while Dylan DeArmitt played well defensively.

5TH/6TH GRADE BOYS

Mariano Medico was the leading scorer as Medico Industries posted a 32-25 victory against the Center For Diagnostic Imaging. Chad Debona chipped in seven points while Brian Banas added four. Vinny Parente played well defensively. Diagnostic Imaging was led by Kyle Razawich's game-high 15 points. Mike Boland chipped in four points while Mike Pierce played well defensively.

Chad Debona scored 14 points to lead Drs. Banas Byron and Kim to a thrilling 36-34 victory against previously undefeated Gem Therapeutics. Justin Brojakowski played well, scoring eight points, while Brian Banas grabbed 10 rebounds and added eight points. John Murray scored a game-high 20 points for Gem Therapeutics. Mike Carey added eight points and Dylan Pilger chipped in five.

Kyle Razawich scored 11 points and Blake Williams added seven as the DYB fifth grade travel team suffered a 29-27 loss against Northwest Area in Lake-Lehman league. Mariano Medico and Justin Brojakowski chipped in with four points each for DYB.

BACK MOUNTAIN GIRLS HELP POCONO WIN GOLD



Several Back Mountain residents were part of the Pocono U-16 field hockey team which captured first place in its division of the National Hockey Festival near Palm Springs, Calif. More than 3,500 athletes competed in the event. Members of the team, from left, first row are Leigh Hillman, Dallas; Sunny Stirewalt, Wilkes-Barre; Amanda Banks, Dallas; Nicole Clemson, Dallas; and Kylie Licata, Mountain Top. Second row: Callie Berryman, Kingston; Emily Leo, Mountain Top; Madeleine Hackett, Shavertown; Lauren Hochreiter, Mountain Top; Katherine Granger, Kingston; Anne Marie Kline, Mountain Top; coach Caroline Blaum, Wilkes-Barre. Gaby Olshemski of Shavertown, coach Karen Klassner and Stroudsburg residents Nicole Grimaldi, Brielle Kessel and Caitlin Toleno are also members of the team.

BACK MOUNTAIN ATHLETES EARN SPORTS AWARDS AT WYOMING SEMINARY



Eight Back Mountain residents recently received sports award at Wyoming Seminary Preparatory School for the fall season. Senior Kaitlyn Snyder of Shavertown received the Gold Award in field hockey and senior Kaytlin Kopen of Shavertown earned the Gold Award tennis. Sophomore Alexandra Hackett of Shavertown was named the Most Valuable Player in cross country, senior Kendra Sirak of Dallas received the Gold Award in field hockey and senior Rebecca Thalenfeld of Dallas earned the Coaches Award in tennis. Also, senior Stephen Levandoski of Dallas received the Gold Award, cross country, Shavertown senior Abigail Sordoni earned the Gold Award in field hockey and senior Jonathan Janerich of Shavertown won the Coaches Award and Gold Award in golf. Attending the awards ceremony, from left, first row are Snyder and Kopen. Second row: Hackett, Sirak and Thalenfeld. Third row: Levandoski, Sordoni and Janerich.