

Tougher schedule will be challenge

Written by Deb Egenberger
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Wrestlers see weekly travels as way to improve, coach says.

Sleeping bags and coolers have become as much a part of the necessary equipment for Gothenburg wrestlers as head-gear and singlets.

The Swedes have traditionally covered many miles through the wrestling season but this year coach Eric Manstedt and his crew will travel to three overnight meets in addition to long trips to Geneva, Hastings and Valentine.

“We do travel a lot but the kids get used to it,” Manstedt said. “They know the routine: Grab your sleeping bag, pack your cooler, get on the bus and let’s go.”

With only two varsity meets at home, the Swedes will see plenty of road time.

That’s not such a bad thing, Manstedt said. With a more diversified schedule that has evolved over the past few seasons, the Swedes now face opponents from a variety of schools.

“We’ll see teams from Alliance to Fort Calhoun, and everywhere in between” Man-stedt said.

They also meet plenty of stiff competition and have ample match opportunities. “The more mat time you get, the more you learn and the better wrestler you are apt to become,” he said.

The Swedes start off the year with three back-to-back varsity meets this weekend.

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“We have an extremely tough schedule,” Manstedt said. “I think that is going to be one of the strengths of this team.”

Gothenburg opens with a dual tournament at Sargent on Thursday before hosting Sidney in a head-to-head dual on Friday beginning at 6 p.m.

Then Saturday takes the Swedes to the Cozad Invite, a meet Gothenburg has not attended in several years.

“We had been going to Broken Bow on the opening weekend,” Manstedt said. “Cozad shows us more big schools and might be a little tougher competition.”

Gothenburg has also added the Flatwater Fracas at Grand Island Dec. 18-19 and the Fillmore Central Invite at Geneva on Dec. 30.

“We could potentially get 20-plus matches before the holiday break,” Manstedt said.

With six strong wrestlers who graduated last year, the Swedes will have a new set of boys in leadership roles. Those will include four returning state qualifiers and eight returning letter winners.

“We’re going to have a good mix of experience and inexperience,” Manstedt said.

Tommy France, Chris Hyde, Tanner Schwanz and Mitch Spiegel know what it’s like to wrestle at the state meet. Manstedt said bringing back that many qualifiers helps display a consistency of expectations throughout the team.

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“The more kids who understand what it takes to get to state, the more people there are who can spread those expectations to others,” he said.

In addition, Manstedt said there are several wrestlers who have competed at the junior varsity level who are anxious to step into varsity roles.

“Those guys are wanting more,” he said. “That creates competition in our wrestling room and that competition makes everyone better.”

The coach expects the Swedes to eventually fill all 14 weights, slipping some young wrestlers into varsity slots.

Manstedt said the Southwest Conference will be full of good wrestlers again with Valentine likely to be the front-runner.

“Valentine will be right back up there and Cozad has a few tough kids,” he said. “Broken Bow stepped up at the end of the year but I’d like to think we have a shot.”

Luckily for the Swedes, the B-4 district moves back east this year to Cozad.

That means at the end of the season when the Swedes are competing for a chance to wrestle in Omaha, their sleeping bags will get a rest.

“It’s as good as being at home,” Manstedt said.

Teams in the district include Alliance, Broken Bow, Chadron, Cozad, Gering, Gothenburg, Holdrege, Lexington, McCook, Ogallala, Scottsbluff and Sidney.

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“We want to go in and give our opponents everything we have to throw at them,” Manstedt said. “Our ultimate goal is getting to state and bringing home some medals.”

Members of the 2009-10 Swede wrestling team are (*denotes letter winner):

SENIORS—Tommy France*, Chris Hyde*, Jeron Seimer, Eric Stevens.

JUNIORS—Kyle Demo-ret*, Clint Furrow, Trent Good, Kyle Kleinknecht, Aaron Lauer, Jesse Larson, Alex McClement, Tracy Nelson, Tre Ostergard*, Tanner Schwanz*.

SOPHOMORES— Bryce Eg-gles-ton*, Dane Ehlers, Cameron Frazho, Ernie Galvan, Justin Larson*, Mitchell Spiegel*.

FRESHMEN—Tyler Block, Cody Cooper, Caleb Geiger, Dalton Goodwin, Dillon Larson, Jake Matthies.