

2001-2002 SEASON COLUMNS by Don Shaffer

Preview

The funny thing about Reynolds' outstanding 2000-01 wrestling season is that it's over.

No more Justin Nestor to anchor the lineup. No more Jerry Kendall to get the ball rolling. The time has come to move on.

This year's edition of the Raiders will sport a fresh new look with some inexperienced - though talented - individuals getting their chance to step into the varsity limelight.

"I like to think that we lost some really outstanding seniors last year, but, we have 12 lettermen back and we have a lot of kids that wrestled two years ago that started for us and didn't get an opportunity to start last year," said head coach Brian Hills. "So, we're really counting on them to step it up this year."

Even though a dozen lettermen return for coach Hills, only senior Justin Hollobaugh has lettered in multiple years.

Hollobaugh, whose first win this season will be his 100th, is clearly the Raiders' top gun entering the season.

He is a three-time state qualifier and placed fourth last season at 119 pounds. He has 99 career wins and with a solid season will likely move into second place all-time on the Raiders' win list.

He will headline a group of 10 seniors who will take on the task of leading the Raiders.

Seniors Tyler Middleton, John Svirbly, Jesse Tumpak, Chris White and Mike Emmett all have lettered within the past two seasons. Nate Lucas, Ryan Kimmy, Jared Reichard and Mike Goodemote are the squad's other 12th graders.

Middleton and Svirbly are the most experienced of this bunch. Middleton qualified for the Regional tournament last year and Svirbly was a solid starter all season long.

Tumpak is back out for the squad after taking two years off. He was a starter as a freshman. White and Emmett, the latter a former Section 3-AA champion, both saw considerable action as sophomores and will likely be the keys - along with Tumpak - to the Raiders' season.

Owen Brickell, Mike Hills and Joel Davis all are likely starters out of the junior class and will look to improve upon their success of last season.

Brickell had a solid season before dropping out of the Section tournament with an injury. Hills won 23 matches and qualified for Regionals as a sophomore heavyweight, which was truly an impressive feat, and Davis is rapidly improving and was a District 10 qualifier last season.

Last year the trio of Jake Habel, Travis Battles and Nick Sommerfeld all started as freshmen and each showed great promise. Because they are so young, and so talented, they may well prove to be the heart of this year's team.

Habel won 28 matches, mostly at 103 pounds, and Battles claimed 17 despite the fact he was bumped out of the lineup by Hollobaugh and did not wrestle in the post season.

Sommerfeld was 12-11 at 189 pounds before an injury stopped his season short. He looks to be primed for an outstanding season and will team with Hills to give the Raiders a powerful one-two punch at the top of the lineup.

Hills is high on junior Nick Hunt, citing him as greatly improved from last season. "We need to find a way to get him in the lineup," Hills said flatly.

Also expected to contribute to the Raiders' success is freshman Jason Brown, who will be the likely starter at 103 pounds. Brown is one of just two freshmen – the other being Eric Campbell – who were kept up with the varsity squad.

"With the group of kids that we have, I think we have almost as good of balance as we had last year. We might not have the 'superstar' wrestlers, but we do feel we have the kids that have the potential to step up to the next level that can become highly regarded wrestlers at the state level," Hills said.

Coach Hills is expected to reach a milestone this season with his 200th win. Entering his 16th season, Hills owns a mark of 196-27-1. He needs four wins to reach 200 and six to pass Neal Lineman (201) as the Raiders' all-time leader in coaching wins.

The Raiders' all-time dual match record stands at 508-65-2.

Tentative starting lineup for the season-opening Mountaineer Tournament. Wrestlers are listed by weight class, name, grade and career record:

103 – Jason Brown, freshman, 0-0.

112 – Jake Habel, sophomore, 28-7.

119 – Chris White, senior, 8-7.

125 – Mike Emmett, senior, 9-8.

130 – Travis Battles, sophomore, 17-10.

135 – Justin Hollobaugh, senior, 99-23.

140 – Tyler Middleton, senior, 14-10.

145 – Owen Brickell, junior, 17-8.

152 – Joel Davis, junior, 4-14.

160 – John Svirbly, senior, 21-17.

171 – Jesse Tumpak, senior, 5-17.

189 – Nick Sommerfeld, sophomore, 12-11.

275 – Mike Hills, junior, 23-23.

Reynolds Mat Notes

We are the champions: Reynolds claims the Mercer County Athletic Conference championship with a 45-5 win over previously-undefeated Hickory (1-29-02). It is the Raiders' 29th MCAC crown since the wrestling program began (1960-61). They have won the MCAC title five straight years and seven of the last eight.

Unbeaten and untied: The Raiders also conclude an unbeaten regular season at 12-0 (8-0 in the MCAC), including two wins over state-ranked opponents (Junita, Brandywine Heights). It is the third unbeaten season for coach Brian Hills and the 16th in school history. Neal Lineman coached nine undefeated teams. Hills (208-27-1) passed Lineman (201-12) this season to become the school's all-time leader in coaching victories.

District 10 duals just ahead: The Raiders will enter the District 10 Class AA Dual Meet Championships as the No. 1 seed and will look to defend their title on Saturday (2-2-02). They will face Maplewood in the 5 p.m. semifinals. The other semifinal pits No. 2 seeded Fort LeBoeuf against the MCAC's Hickory. The winner of the D-10 Duals title will advance to the State Duals in Hershey (2-8 and 2-9-02). The D-10 champ will - barring a huge upset in District 11 - face defending state champion and No. 1 ranked Wilson in the first round. That match is set for 6 p.m. on Friday (2-8-02) at Hersheypark Arena.

Do not adjust the Balance: It's highly likely 11 Raiders – and possibly more - will reach 20 wins this season. Six already have (Travis Battles, Justin Hollobaugh, Tyler Middleton, Owen Brickell, Joel Davis and Jesse Tumpak) and three more have 19 (Brown, Habel and Sommerfeld).

Moving on up: Senior Justin Hollobaugh (121-27-0) now ranks ninth in school history in terms of most wins. He has already passed Jerry Kendall (115) and assistant coach John Tofani (117) this season. He will likely pass No. 8 Bob Tumpak (122) and No. 7 Casey Taylor (123) in the very near future. Hollobaugh entered the season at 99-25, and has posted a 22-4 mark to date (1-30-02). Hollobaugh could climb as high as No. 2 on the win list but will not catch all-time leader Justin Nestor (153).

Want more stats? Here are some other up-to-the-minute (1-30-02) career records: Habel (47-16), Battles (42-12), Brickell (40-11), Hills (39-33), Svirbly (36-26), Middleton (34-19), Sommerfeld (31-18), Davis (27-20), Tumpak (25-26), White (21-20) and Hunt (12-1).

Reynolds Wins 8th Straight Section 3 Title

Feb. 18, 2002 - Balance has been the key to the 2001-02 Reynolds wrestling team and this past weekend was no exception.

The Raiders dominated the annual District 10 Section 3-AA tournament at Sharon High School, winning the school's eighth straight team championship and advancing all 13 wrestlers to the D-10 tournament.

"That's a first, at least since I've been coaching," said Raiders head coach Brian Hills. "We've never taken the whole team to Districts before. We've taken 11 and 12, but never all 13. I talked with coach (Neal) Lineman about it and he couldn't remember ever taking the whole team, either."

"I think that was a real tribute to our balance," Hills added.

Four Raiders won championships – sophomore Jake Habel (103), senior Justin Hollobaugh (125), junior Owen Brickell (130) and sophomore Nick Sommerfeld (171). For Hollobaugh, it was his third Section title, while three of the four champs are underclassmen.

Five other Raiders placed second – freshman Jason Brown (112), sophomore Travis Battles (119), senior Tyler Middleton (135), junior Nick Hunt (140) and junior Joel Davis (152).

Senior John Svirbly (145) and junior Mike Hills (275) placed third and senior Jesse Tumpak (160) and freshman Eric Campbell (189) were fourth.

Like father, like son: Owen Brickell (28-4) and his father Rick (1981) become the second father and son tandem in school history to win Section championships.

They will now look to become the first father and son tandem to win District titles.

For trivia buffs, the first father and son tandem to win Section crowns were Nate (1993) and Wes Palm (1964).

Of course, that all goes out the window if you were to count coach Hills and step-son Casey Taylor.

Count the lights, baby: Sophomore Nick Sommerfeld pinned his way through three tournament bouts, including a first-period fall in the finals over Chrystian Bedell of Sharon. He was the tournament's only wrestler to score three falls.

Sommerfeld and Travis Battles are now tied for the team lead with 15 falls this season. Third is Jake Habel with 11. All three - this should make you feel good - are sophomores.

First win a pin: The difference between Reynolds advancing all 13 wrestlers or not was likely the performance of freshman Eric Campbell (189).

After losing a hard-fought 3-1 decision in the quarterfinals, Campbell bounced back to score a fall in his consolation semifinal to advance. It was the first varsity win for Campbell (1-2) who spent the regular season on the junior varsity squad bouncing around between 171 and 275 pounds in an effort to wrestle as many matches as possible.

Campbell plans to wrestle 170 pounds in the upcoming Junior Olympic tournaments.

Hollobaugh moves on up: Justin Hollobaugh (125-28) continues his climb up the school's all-time win chart and now sits in seventh position, having passed Casey Taylor (123-10) and Bob Tumpak (122-29).

Next up are No. 6 Jonathan Hazi (130-13) and No. 5 Steve Popovitch (133-22). That is some pretty serious company.

Hollobaugh also has his sights set on the second-place trio of Jason Walter, Mark Bodo and Jason Nestor – all with 137 wins.

Now a three-time Section champion, Hollobaugh will look for his third District 10 title this weekend.

Looking ahead, looking good: Reynolds' starting Section lineup included just four seniors – Hollobaugh, Middleton, Svirbly and Tumpak.

Senior Chris White, who started nearly all season at 119 pounds, was bumped out of the lineup when most of the wrestlers dropped a weight class or two for the post season.

White was solid for the Raiders all season and stepped up huge at the District 10 Duals with a big win in the Fort LeBoeuf match.

Looking ahead, still looking good: Pairings have been released for the D-10 tournament and in most instances, the Raiders appear to have a decent draw.

Look for the Raiders to advance between eight and 11 wrestlers to the Northwest Regional.

Special Post Season Column

While the community is still buzzing about the Raiders' outstanding performance at the recent Class AA Northwest Regional, there is little time to celebrate as the PIAA Championships begin on Thursday (3-7-02).

Reynolds will be well represented at Hershey, as a record-tying seven Raiders battled their way through a strong Regional field to earn their shot at wrestling immortality – a state championship.

Reynolds state qualifiers are seniors Justin Hollobaugh (125, 32-6), John Svirbly (145, 23-16), Jesse Tumpak (160, 30-15), junior Owen Brickell (130, 34-4) and sophomores Jake Habel (103, 29-12), Travis Battles (119, 35-6) and Nick Sommerfeld (171, 29-11).

Though they did not qualify for the state tournament, juniors Nick Hunt (140, 19-6) and Joel Davis (152, 31-12) also contributed key points in the team standings as the Raiders outdistanced the field by a nearly 2-to-1 margin.

While its great knowing that the Raiders have seven wrestlers vying for a state title, its an even better feeling knowing that four of them will return to the team next year.

FLASHBACK TO 1975: Reynolds also had seven state qualifiers in 1975.

They were seniors Brian Hills (167), LeRoy Sample (132) and Rick Haws (138), juniors Dave Kress (Hwt.), Doug Shaffer (185) and Jeff Shipton (105) and sophomore Jerry Diehl (98).

Shipton, Sample and Hills all wrestled in the finals that year with Shipton winning the lone title.

Although official team standings were not kept until the next season, Reynolds and coach Neal Lineman won the mythical team championship that year, easily outdistancing the field.

Hills missed out on winning his own state title, losing literally in the final second, but has gone on to secure some measure of relief by coaching 12 state champions.

FAMILY TRADITION: Congratulations to the Brickell family as Owen and his father Rick recently became the first father-and-son tandem in school history to win District 10 titles.

Rick won his title in 1981 at 138 pounds, while Owen won his title at 130 pounds.

It's interesting to note that the two do sport similar styles although I would have to say that Rick – who was a teammate of mine - may have been a little more physical, but Owen is definitely a little quicker and slicker.

Owen, by the way, went on to win the Raiders' only Northwest Regional title this past weekend. And that's something his father never did. (Sorry, Rick)

HE AIN'T HEAVY, HE'S MY BROTHER: The Brickell's aren't the only family members on this year's team to have some footprints to follow to the state tournament. Jake Habel, John Svirbly and Jesse Tumpak, too, are carrying on a family tradition of sorts.

Habel's older brother Rocky is a former PIAA qualifier; Svirbly's brother Dan, was a fourth place finisher in 1998; and, Tumpak's brother, Bobby, was a sixth-place finisher in '98 as well.

Just as a note, that '98 team won the PIAA Class AA team championship with five place- winners among its six qualifiers.

MOST IMPROVED: It would be hard to argue against Joel Davis as the Raiders' most improved wrestler this season. Davis, a junior, posted a 3-3 mark last season and had a career record of 4-14 coming into the season.

He made a believer out of everyone with an outstanding 31-12 mark. He came up one match short of qualifying for the state tournament, finishing fourth at the Regional tournament.

In an age of year-round wrestling, Davis is a freak of nature. He played basketball through seventh grade and never even stepped on a wrestling mat until eighth grade.

Believe us when we say, we're glad he made the switch.

EVERYBODY LOVES STATS: Here are the current career records of Reynolds' seven PIAA qualifiers. Jake Habel (57-19), Travis Battles (52-16), Justin Hollobaugh (131-29), Owen Brickell (51-12), John Svirbly (44-33), Jesse Tumpak (35-32) and Nick Sommerfeld (41-22). ... As a team, Reynolds wrestlers were a combined 23-10 at Regionals. ...

Justin Hollobaugh has wrestled 160 career matches to date. The school record is 164 (Justin Nestor). ... Hollobaugh's 131 wins rank him sixth in school history. He trails only Justin Nestor (153), Jason Nestor (137), Mark Bodo (137), Jason Walter (137) and Steve Popovitch (133).

Season - Wrap Up

An undefeated regular season, seven state qualifiers and a District 10 team championship were just some of the highlights of the recently completed 2001-02 Reynolds High School wrestling season.

"Coming into the season, I think a lot of people really didn't know what to make of us," said Raiders veteran head coach Brian Hills. "We lost a lot of outstanding individuals from last year."

"I knew we had a chance to have an outstanding season. We had some guys on the team like (sophomores) Travis Battles and Nick Sommerfeld who weren't even in the Section lineup last year," Hills said. "I think some people forgot about those guys; and, Owen Brickell got hurt at Sections last year and missed the rest of the postseason."

"Even though we didn't have the outstanding individuals – like (three-time state champion) Justin Nestor and (2001 state champ) Jerry Kendall – I thought balance-wise we would be every bit as strong," Hills said.

Turns out, Coach Hills knew exactly what he was talking about.

The Raiders steamrolled through the regular season at 14-0, winning its 29th Mercer County Athletic Conference championship in the process. It was the Raiders' 13th undefeated regular season and the third for coach Hills.

Regular-season highlights included a heart-stopping 26-20 win over state-ranked Juniata at the Brookville Ultimate Duals and a 45-5 blowout of previously-undefeated Hickory in the MCAC title match.

Overall team balance was the key to the Raiders' success in 2001-02 as every regular in the Raiders' dual match lineup had a winning record.

"Things really seemed to fall into place for us when we were able to get a couple of guys down in weight and put Nick Hunt into the lineup," Hills said. "That really solidified things for us."

The Raiders defended their District 10 Team Duals title with easy wins over Maplewood (47-9) in the semifinals and Fort LeBoeuf (46-11) in the championship finals.

The lone loss on the Raiders dual-match record came at the PIAA Class AA Dual Match Championships in Hershey, where they fell to two-time state team champions Wilson.

The squad took part in four in-season tournaments, placing first at the Mountaineer and Lewistown events, third at Tool City and fourth at Manheim. The Raiders were especially dominating at Lewistown where all 13 wrestlers placed either first, second or third.

For all the success in the regular season, the Raiders once again were at their best when the post-season tournaments rolled around. The Raiders won the Section 3-AA tournament and advanced its entire team of 13 to the District 10 Championships.

Section champions were Jake Habel (103), Justin Hollobaugh (125), Owen Brickell (130) and Nick Sommerfeld (171). The Raiders now total 198 all-time Section champions.

The Raiders stayed hot the following weekend, dominating the D-10 event and advancing nine to the Northwest Regional. Championships went to Hollobaugh and Brickell – the school's 80th and 81st D-10 winners. For Hollobaugh, it was a third D-10 title, tying a school record.

At the Northwest Regional, the Raiders again were up to the task, winning the team title and advancing seven wrestlers to the state tournament, including Brickell, the Raiders' lone tourney champion and the school's 40th Regional champ.

PIAA qualifiers were seniors Hollobaugh (125), John Svirbly (145) and Jesse Tumpak (160), junior Brickell (130) and sophomores Jake Habel (103), Travis Battles (125) and Sommerfeld (171).

The Raiders endured a dreadful opening day in Hershey - going 0-7 in the preliminary round - but bounced back like true champions to finish seventh in the team standings with three place-winners.

"When I saw the state pairings I knew we were going to have some trouble," Hills said. "I thought we had a shot to win maybe two of those matches, but we knew it was going to be tough. Of our seven qualifiers, six were there for the first time."

Hollobaugh, Battles and Svirbly all returned home with fifth-place medals. Sommerfeld posted a 1-2 mark, just missing a spot in the top eight, while Tumpak, Brickell and Habel all went 0-2.

"Realistically, going down to the state tournament I thought we had a shot to come home with two medals. We ended up getting three, so I was very happy with that," Hills said.

Hollobaugh closed out his high school career with an overall record of 135-31. He set a school record for most matches wrestled in a career – breaking Justin Nestor's mark of 164. He was a four-time state qualifier and two-time state place-winner.

Svirbly was one of the great success stories of the PIAA tournament, coming in with the event's worst won-loss record but placing fifth. Battles - who was not even in the Raiders' post season lineup a year ago - also finished fifth and is just a sophomore.

Others who contributed to the Raiders' ultra successful season included seniors Chris White (119), Tyler Middleton (135), Mike Emmett (125) and Ryan Kimmy (189), juniors Hunt (140), Joel Davis (152) and Mike Hills (275), sophomore Nate Glaser (112) and freshmen Jason Brown (103, 112) and Eric Campbell (189).

Davis was likely the team's most improved wrestler, making great strides while improving from 3-3 last season to 31-12 this year. Tumpak, who did not wrestle the last two years, hopped back into the varsity lineup, won 30 matches and became a state qualifier. Mike Hills was solid at heavyweight with a 22-13 mark, Brown stepped in as a freshman and went 24-15, and the list goes on and on.

"I think you would have to say this will go down as one of the great team performances in the program's history," Hills said. "From a team standpoint, and as far as overall balance, this truly is one of the great ones."

Note: Reynolds advanced 15 wrestlers (13 Area VI champs) to the Pennsylvania Junior Wrestling state championships to be held in Johnstown, PA. ... Wilson is the only team to have beaten Reynolds in the last two seasons. ... Hollobaugh was a four-time Lewistown Tournament champion and won the 2001-02 Outstanding Wrestler Award. ... With 135 career wins, Hollobaugh ranks fifth all-time among Reynolds wrestlers. ... Sommerfeld (0:17) had the fastest fall at the Manheim Tournament. ... Hollobaugh, Brickell and Sommerfeld were named to the Mercer County Athletic Conference first team, while Brown, Habel, White, Battles, Middleton, Hunt and Davis were second team picks. ... Coach Hills was the Section 3-AA co-Coach of the Year, sharing the honors with Mercer's Keith DeGraaf. ... The following is a list of this year's varsity wrestlers with season records followed by career records: Justin Hollobaugh (36-8, 135-31), John Svirbly (27-18, 48-35), Jesse Tumpak (30-17, 35-34), Chris White (15-14, 23-21), Tyler Middleton (25-14, 39-24), Mike Emmett (2-2, 11-10), Ryan Kimmy (0-5), Owen Brickell (34-6, 57-16), Joel Davis (31-12, 35-26), Nick Hunt (19-6, 20-6), Mike Hills (22-13, 45-36), Jake Habel (29-14, 57-21), Travis Battles (39-8, 56-18), Nick Sommerfeld (30-13, 42-24), Nate Glaser (2-2), Jason Brown (24-15) and Eric Campbell (1-4).