

Sports

Where there is a Will, there is a way

Freshman Will Mengarelli competes at varsity level

BY RYAN TAYLOR
The Booster Redux

New to school, freshman Will Mengarelli instantly got involved in athletics, joining the football team and now wrestling varsity in the 170 pound weight class.

For the past five years, Mengarelli has gained the experience in order to make the varsity wrestling team.

"You get the crap beat out of you the first few years by the upperclassmen, but you learn as you go," said Mengarelli. "When wrestling varsity there is a lot of experience and you are in a group of people where everyone respects you."

Last year Mengarelli stepped on top of the medal stand after capturing the state 8th grade title in Arizona.

"It's a really good feeling. Kind of like relieving, knowing that all the time and

hard work you put in wasn't just a waste, but that it actually paid off," he said.

This past fall Mengarelli put on his football pads for only his third season ever. While some kids were playing football as soon as they could walk, Mengarelli was kept away from the sport to insure interest in the sport later on.

"My parents kind of held me out so I wouldn't get burnt out. They wanted me to play for school, not club ball," he said.

Mengarelli played special teams for varsity and was able to make his first varsity start towards the end of the season due to an injury of another player.

"It [sports] sometimes makes me feel good about myself, like getting varsity time is great," he said. "It's also just for fun. Some people lose track of that."



As his father shouts suggested moves, freshman Will Mengarelli attempts to gain the upper hand against Independence opponent DJ Kessler before pinning him later in the match.

PHOTO BY MIRANDA MOORE



About to pin his opponent, sophomore Willie Johns anticipates the ref's count during a home match. Wrestling requires extreme dedication. "It takes a certain individual to do the sport," coach Scott Rieck said. PHOTO BY HAYDEN PARKS

Athletes push it to the limit

Wrestlers endure challenging physical conditions during season

BY KATIE PHALEN
The Booster Redux

Early morning practices before school, performing in front of huge crowds, and maintaining a healthy diet are among the many ways wrestlers are expected to dedicate themselves to their sport throughout the winter activities season, which is the longest of the school year. The wrestling season begins in mid-November and carries on until the end of February and is filled with weekend tournaments, two-a-day practices and early morning weigh-ins, making the wrestling team one of the most dedicated and closely bonded teams at the high school.

"It's hard to get them there at first because they don't understand the sport. But once I get kids in it and they do it, they fall in love with it," wrestling head coach Scott Rieck said. "It's the one-on-one competitive nature of it."

The sport of wrestling is a demanding one; athletes challenge their opponent in the center of the mat, alone with no one to depend on but themselves, and surrounded by a crowd of spectators cheering them on. The pressure of performing is great, especially on the enormous stage that is the state tournament, which is one of the program has been familiar with for the past few years. The program has produced at least one state finalist every year since 2005, starting when Brandon Wise qualified.

"It's always hard to get something at first, but once you get it then it gets easier," Rieck said. "He kind of broke the ice for us. From that point on we've always had a state finalist."

Jeremiah Jones, senior, has been wrestling since he was in elementary school. Jones says he likes wrestling because it has been such a big part of his life for so long.

"I like wrestling a lot because it's pretty much the only thing I've ever stuck with, I've been in it

since first grade," Jones said. "It's a team sport and an individual sport. In wrestling, when you win, you know you did your part and did everything you could to help the team."

Though Jones loves the sport, he says he does not have plans to continue on with it to the next level, which would be college wrestling.

"It's not that I don't like it, it's just that I've gotten burnt out on it over the years. Especially in high school, it's hard and it takes a lot of dedication," Jones said. "Four months out of the year, it's definitely tough."

Though the program has seen a lot of success in the past decade, the sport of wrestling is still not as well known throughout the community as other sports such as football or basketball, and is often

"Anything that means anything to you you'll have to sacrifice for. If it doesn't hurt, it doesn't have as much meaning to it, then everyone would be a champ."

-SCOTT RIECK, WRESTLING COACH

met with some negative perceptions dealing with the common practice of losing weight.

"To me, the only downside of high school wrestling that I see is that some young men are still growing and they're not eating all that they might," health teacher and football coach Merle Clark said. "But Coach Rieck does a great job of keeping a handle on that and not allowing our young athletes to go beyond what they should for a healthy, normal limit."

Rieck puts the athletes on a healthy diet regimen at the beginning of the season. He says that though it is a tough thing to do for yourself and your team, it is beneficial in that it makes you want to work harder, and also teaches the athletes how to eat healthy and appreciate food.

"Anything that means anything to you you'll have to sacrifice for. If it doesn't hurt, it doesn't have as much meaning to it, then everyone would be a champ," Rieck said. "It takes a mentally tough person to do some of the things we do. It takes a certain individual to do the sport."

There are rules put in place by the Kansas State High School Athletics Association to ensure that wrestlers do not lose an unhealthy amount of weight during the season. Athletes are only allowed to lose 8% of their Alpha Weight, which is taken at the beginning of the season. They also have to pass various hydration tests throughout the season to check that the wrestler is drinking an adequate amount of water.

"You kind of have to think of it as a car. If you put bad gas in the car it won't perform very well," athletic director Doug Hitchcock said. "It's the same way with athletes. If they don't eat good vegetables and fruits and things like that then they won't perform very well."

Jones, who has lost the most weight on the team this year (about 18 pounds) says that restricting your diet is perfectly healthy, as long as it is done the right way. He said he had to change his diet from greasy foods to healthier choices.

"I had to go from stuff like shakes and brownies and greasy burgers to things like poached eggs and bananas and kiwis," Jones said. "Instead of going for the supersized meal, I go for smaller portions. It's not too hard as long as you go about it the smart way."

Those who have a negative perception of cutting weight and the sport of wrestling are typically the ones who do not know much about it, and with Pittsburg being predominantly a football town, those judgements are more common. Jones wants everyone to know how difficult the sport is, and how hard the team works.

"It's really tough," Jones said. "It's definitely not for the weak."

Girls basketball team makes cuts

Two players, two surgeries, one weekend

BY PARKER MATTHEWS
The Booster Redux

Injury and illness have plagued the girls basketball team recently, including the emergency appendectomies of junior Katie Phalen and senior Lizzy Willis. Phalen's appendectomy took place Friday, Jan. 18, while Willis' was the following Sunday.

"[Katie's appendectomy] was so surprising. Especially when I heard that Lizzy also had an appendectomy," senior Alaura Short said.

Due to the lack of players, some girls who originally played in C-team games are now being bumped up to the varsity squad, thus cancelling C-team games altogether. Saturday, at the Burlington tournament, in the game against Sebetha, the varsity

team was short of a playable team by one. Freshman Kaylie Curtis was added to the roster shortly before the game, or else the game would have been forfeited.

"It was almost comical in the way that you're just thinking 'can one more person get injured?'" assistant coach Bridgett Keating-Lancaster said. "The appendectomies were especially hard, since Lizzy is a starter and Katie's first off the bench. We had to start relying on freshmen."

This is not Willis' nor Phalen's first time they will be coming back from a rather serious medical ailments. Willis has torn her Medial Collateral Ligament (MCL) as well as had four knee surgeries, yet she was able to make a quick full recovery.

Short has been a teammate of Willis since the sixth grade.

"She's come back from injuries too soon in the past, I just worry that she'll hurt herself," Short said.

Despite the recent surgery and the looming pain, Willis played in the Fort Scott game Tuesday. She started the game and played a majority of it.

"It's all up to my pain level, I wasn't in very much pain during the game [as long as I kept my mind off it. I just had to focus on basketball," Willis said pertaining to some people's reluctance for her to play in the Fort Scott game. "I've had four knee surgeries and came back from them all. I find it harder to sit out than deal with the pain. And I couldn't miss senior night, it means so much to me because it shows how much we have worked and it's nice to get recognized for it"

Phalen has had two ankle

surgeries, yet remains a three-sport athlete as well as a dancer.

"Coming back from the appendectomy will definitely be a lot easier than coming back from my ankle surgeries with the help of my family and friends," Phalen said. "After my appendectomy, I have been feeling improvement day by day, while after my ankle surgeries I didn't feel improvement all the time."

Now that Willis is back, the team can start getting back to its original form, but not entirely until Phalen is fully healed.

"I definitely do not regret playing," Willis said. "It would have be more painful for me to sit on the sideline and just watch my teammates instead of being out there on the court with them."

DID YOU KNOW

Varsity Basketball

After losing games against Chanute and Sebetha, the boys varsity team was able to get back on track with a 58-52 win over rival Fort Scott. Senior Tanner Ellis led the team with 22 points with fellow senior Stefon Rich close behind with 17. Girls varsity is on a four game losing streak, with losses coming from Santa Fe Trail, Sebetha, Chanute, and Fort Scott. The girls will look to end the drought tomorrow against Columbus.

JV/Frosh Basketball

The JV boys lost Tuesday in a dramatic 51-50 ending against Fort Scott, after playing Chanute last Friday. JV girls also lost to Fort Scott on Tuesday.

Wrestling

Last Saturday, the wrestling team participated in the Chanute SEK Tournament and placed eighth overall as a team. The team also had four individuals place: Levi Kester, 106, fourth, Brett Cobb, 132, fourth, Gershom Avalos, 220, third, and Jeremiah Jones, 113, first. Their next competition will be a double duel with Parsons and Labette.

2013 Homecoming Candidates



Senior Malory White
"If chosen, I think I would be representing various groups that don't usually get recognized; I don't think of myself as the typical homecoming type. Being crowned would definitely be one of the most exciting moments I've ever experienced. It would be something I would remember and cherish for the entirety of my life."



Senior Andie Casper
"It would be awesome to be homecoming queen. Vote for me!"



Junior Loren Kutz
"Because every Princess deserves their tiara."



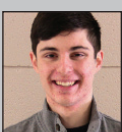
Junior Sarah Jewett
"I truly care about PHS and the students here. I try to represent PHS to the best of my ability in athletics and in performing arts. I love making other people happy and plus, I smile a lot. I am honored to be a part of the 2013 winter homecoming court."



Senior Kyle Untereker
"Because I'm Jethrow and The Nick Vacca said so."



Senior Nick Vacca
"Vote for Kyle."



Junior Cole Hamblin
"Because I would look awesome with a crown."



Junior Adam LasKaras
"Because I haven't won anything in my life and it would be an honor to win."