Club team small, but potent; grapples with the best of them

BY MARK MONROE

The University of Toledo Wrestling Club is a small, but formidable group that made an impact on the mats at regional and national tournaments this season.

The UT club team, which competes in the National Collegiate Wrestling Association, qualified five wrestlers to the national championships last month in Lakeland, Fla.

Junior Adam Murray, a 197-pounder from Pickettton North High School, won a third consecutive individual title for the Rockets.

Murray is the only second wrestler to accomplish the feat in the 11-year history of the NCWA.

Three local wrestlers also helped Toledo place third in the North Central Conference tournament. Drew Metzger (Findlay), Brent Stockman (Defiance), and Jeff Piotrowski (Central Catholic) were among several grapplers who competed for the Rockets at the tournament in Columbus last month.

Coach Matthew Rempe said the team had wrestlers in just seven of the 11 weight classes but still finished third.

"The cool thing was how we did at the nationals qualifier," Rempe said. "We only took seven athletes and took third out of 30 teams."

Murray, Metzger (235 pounds), Stockman (125), Tom Kiefer (174 of St. Peter Chanel High), and Matt Marek (194 of Nondorium) also qualified for the national meet.

They led the Rockets to a 12th-place finish out of 75 teams.

Murray, who is also the team's student coordinator, went 20-0. He also was named the conference wrestler of the year.

"He's a killer," Rempe said. "He's fundamentally sound, too."

During the course of the three-day national tournament, Murray defeated opponents from Luriee County Community College, the University of New Hampshire, Florida Gulf Coast University, and Miami University.

He knocked off a foe from the University of Central Florida for the championship. He pinned all but one opponent.

"Murray is an excellent example of a superior student-athlete," Rempe said. "He maintains a 3.75 GPA in mechanical engineering, while sharing coaching duties."

Metzger placed fifth to earn all-American status along with Murray.

"Drew will wait and wait and then execute flawlessly," Rempe said.

Stockman, a three-year greco-roman wrestler, went 1-2 at the national tournament.

"He came out late in this season and worked incredibly hard to get in shape," Rempe said. "He still wanted to do it." Stockman, who is 20, joined the team after serving in the U.S. Marine Corps.

The people that we have are winning. We just need more numbers," Rempe said.

"These guys are not because they love the sport," Rempe said.

The team competed in events in Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio. In early February, the club hosted a dual meet tournament. Teams from Bowling Green, Dayton, Marshall, Ohio State, and Ohio universities competed.

"Part of the reason I get involved was because I enjoy coaching high-caliber wrestlers," Rempe said.

"We have good-quality wrestlers that I can take and help with their techniques and get rid of bad habits that won't work in college wrestling," Rempe said.

Rempe, who is a 30-year-old from Sylvania, wrestled for the University of Nebraska. He also was an assistant coach at Toledo Christian High School.

Rempe said he knew the UT wrestling Club was a quality program and wanted to help it grow.

"I feel we have more talent at UT than we have out of the gate. It's just because people don't know about the club," Rempe said.

Rempe said while the group emphasizes conditioning, it also is a relaxed organization.

"We have a fun atmosphere in practice," Rempe said. "It's not military-style. It's about getting in shape, too. We really push each other hard."

Rempe said any UT student interested in joining the team can e-mail him at toledowrestling@comcast.net.

"We're looking for good people," Rempe said.

"We have seven [of 11 weight classes] that were ready to compete at the conference championships. We'd like to have more wrestlers at every weight class."