

MIDD-WEST WRESTLING

Seniors look to leave mark on Mustangs' program

By ZACH KNEPP

Sentinel correspondent

MIDDLEBURG — This season all eyes on the Mid-West wrestling team will be focused on a pair of seniors who have one more year to leave a mark on the Mustang history books.

Ty Knepp and Sam Shirey return for their final year of scholastic wrestling after very impressive junior campaigns. Early signs from the wrestling room at Mid-West High School show that the encores may be even better.

Knepp finished fourth in the state at 140 pounds and posted a 23-5 record last season after a soccer injury cost him nearly 20 matches. With his career win percentage, those matches would have likely given him his 100th career victory last year. He also would have been in an easy position to break Nate Renard's school record of 117 wins.

After Knepp returned to the lineup, he showed little sign of rust as he finished the regular season with only one loss. He then won his section and finished as the runner-up in District 4 and the Northeast Region.

"Missing those matches last year doesn't really bother me," Knepp said. "I'm just looking forward and worried about wrestling this season."

This season the standout grappler has his sights set high.

"My goal is to win sectionals, districts, regionals and then go after a state title," Knepp said. "Obviously I really want to get my 100th win and give a shot at 118 wins."

Knepp currently boasts a career record of 82-21.

Mid-West coach Clint Swartz feels Knepp has the work ethic to accomplish his goals.

"Ty does what he needs to do to get ready for each match. Our goal is to get him prepared for the postseason and hopefully a trip back to Hershey."

Shirey also had a stellar season in 2007-08. The senior posted a 39-8 mark highlighted by a seventh place finish in the state tournament in the 135 weight class. Like Knepp, Shirey won his section and finished second in Dis-



Sentinel photo by ZACHARY KNEPP

Members of the Mid-West Area High School wrestling team are, from left, front, Jeremiah Minium, Trevor Master, Tyler Herb and Christian Klinger; second row, Landon Bruner, Nick Kratzer, Caleb Gilbert, Aaron Shrawder, Shedyn Kehler, Tyler Kratzer and Travis Walter; third row, Chris Baker, Sam Shirey, Ty Knepp, Alex Callender, Barrett Shaffer, Jed Heintzleman, Jon Aumiller, Matt Tilkins and Mike Shadel.

AT A GLANCE

MIDD-WEST
MUSTANGSDistrict 4, Class AA
Heartland ConferenceCoach: Clint Swartz
2007: 5-19 (2-4 TVL)

trict 4 and the Northeast Region.

He also should reach his 100th career win this season and give a good run at Renard's mark. Going into the season Shirey posts a career record of 76-42.

"Sam has really put in the extra time to improve his skills," Swartz said. "I think he'll have another successful season on the mat and continue to progress."

Swartz hopes his two captains' work ethic rubs off on the rest of the team.

"I've been around this team for three years now (two as head coach). There has been one thing in common - Ty and Sam. They like to battle each other during practice and it gets pretty in-

tense," he said. "That intensity rubs off on the other wrestlers. I'm looking for them to take a leadership role and help mold the young guys in the mat room."

A lot of molding will be necessary for the inexperienced Mustangs. A majority of the 25-man roster has little or no varsity experience. Eleven of Mid-West's wrestlers will be trying to compete on the varsity level for the first time while many returning grapplers underachieved last season.

Noted returners other than Knepp and Shirey are seniors Barrett Shaffer (145-160) and Jed Heintzleman (189-215), along with junior Chris Baker (171-189).

"We're looking for those three to make an impact on our lineup this season," Swartz said.

Baker finished 28-15 last season. After getting through sections and districts, his season came to an end after he was injured while trailing badly in the consolation bracket during regionals.

"Chris qualifying for regionals was a big surprise for us last year," said Swartz. "He is a good athlete and his technique is improving. We are expecting good things from him this season."

Swartz likes what he sees so far as whole with this version of the Mustangs.

"The preseason has been pretty good so far. Everyone has been working hard and putting in the effort. It looks as if we'll be able to put a wrestler at every weight," he said.

The full lineup has Swartz con-

vinced Mid-West may be able to pull out more wins as a team this season.

"It is definitely a good thing to fill your lineup. With Ty in the lineup for a full season we'll have more options to change some things around. That will obviously influence other teams' lineups and maybe we can pick up a few wins."

Despite a full squad of healthy wrestlers, Mid-West may find its dual meet season a tough one.

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