



Kids wrestling tourney draws hundreds



The Kansas Kids Wrestling District 4 North Sub-district tournament brought in hundreds of wrestlers, coaches and family members to the Max Jones Fieldhouse on Saturday. More than 400 wrestlers were expected. The tournament organizers had to run four mats in the main gym and more in the junior varsity gym, sometimes with two matches going on each mat. The district finals will be Saturday at Trego Community High School in WaKeeney.

Photo by Kevin Bottrell
The Goodland Star-News

Former Goodland coach wins Colorado 5A state title

By Karen Krien
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The Pine Creek High School wrestling team, lead by former Goodland High School wrestling coach Billy Gabel, claimed the Colorado 5A state title on Feb. 18.

Eight of the Pine Creek wrestlers placed at the state tournament, one taking first, three in second place, two third place winners, one fourth and one sixth.

Following the announcement of the team's championship title, he was named 5A Coach of the Year. On Monday, Feb. 20, he received a phone call informing him that he was selected as the Coach of the Year for the state of Colorado in all classifications (2A, 3A, 4A and 5A).

In the fall, Gabel, who is originally from St. Francis, was inducted into the Kansas Wrestling Coaches Association Hall of Fame.

Gabel knew what it was like to be a champion wrestler, having taken state four times - a feat claimed by few. He finished his high school career with 125 wins and 5 losses. He was named Senior 3-2-1A Wrestler of the Year and was the 1996 Kansas Wrestler of the Year.

He competed in the Junior Fargo All Americans for two years placing fifth in Greco Roman the first year and seventh the second year. He was a four-time Junior Regional National Champion and was named Outstanding Wrestler in 1996 at the Rocky Mountain Regionals. Gabel was also featured in the 1996 Sports Illustrated magazine.

After high school, he was recruited by the University of Nebraska at Lincoln and wrestled there from 1996-1999. He then transferred to Oklahoma State University to wrestle with his brother, Kelly Gabel. He wrestled at OSU from 1999-2001 where he graduated with his degree in Physical Education.

He then began teaching and coaching in Goodland from 2001-2002. He went on to teach and coach at Pine Creek High School in Colorado Springs. He was the assistant wrestling coach there from 2002 - 2007 and was named the head wrestling coach in 2008.

As a first time head coach for Pine Creek High School, Gabel's team placed 30th in the state. His second year as head coach, the team placed second in the state where Gabel was honored with the 5A Coach of the

Year Award.

His third year they placed seventh in the state, and last year his team took a third place finish at the state tournament. In the five years he has been the head wrestling coach, he has had 24 state placers and-or champions, two two-time state champions, five High School National All-Americans, one Senior National third place All-American, and six Fargo National All-Americans.

Gabel said he believes that athletics, coaching and life are summed up in a couple of sentences: "You have to be willing to sacrifice to achieve something great! Staying strong in your faith in the Lord and trusting His lead in your life will always be worth while."

Gabel is the son of Larry and Beth Gabel, Colby. Larry Gabel, now principal at Colby High School, was the head wrestling coach in St. Francis for 32 years. In 2005, Larry received the Kansas Wrestling Coaches Association Hall of Fame Award and just last year was inducted into the Kansas Activities Association Hall of Fame.



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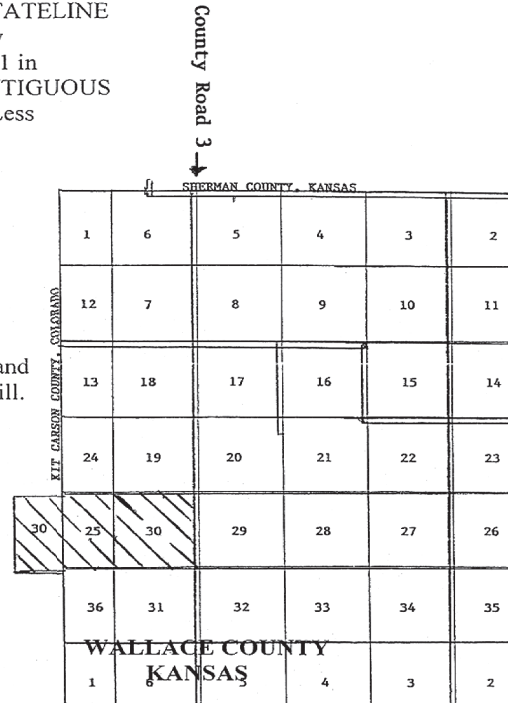
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