

Gator wrestlers finish sixth at Sertoma again
By: Ryan Bergeron

After seeing their triangular dual event in Mahanomen scheduled for December 6 versus two Section 8A opponents get postponed, the Gator wrestlers stepped on the mat for their first action in nearly a week at the annual Sertoma Dual Tournament at Grand Forks Central High School in Grand Forks, N.D., December 9 and 10. In a tournament featuring talent from both North Dakota and Minnesota, the Gators managed to go 2-3 and finish sixth at the 16-team tourney for a second consecutive season.

"I thought overall we wrestled pretty tough against some pretty solid wrestling teams," Gator Coach Todd Bergeron said. "I like how we battled and never gave up. If we keep working hard and battling the way we did, this team will continue to see improvements all year long."

Gators 48 Knights 27

In opening round action, the Gators faced the host team-- the Grand Forks Central Knights. The Gators won nine of the 14 matches, including five by pin and one by forfeit, en route to the victory. Starting the action at 182, the Knights' Cameran Bridgeford would pin the Gators' Colby Wooten with 21 seconds remaining in the match, giving the Knights the early lead.

The Gators' Dominik Vacura (195) would get his team on the scoreboard following a pin over Gordon Isler, and Devin Pries (220) would control his match from beginning to end in a 10-2 victory over Brady Terrill to help give the Gators a 10-6 lead.

Zach Evans (285) would fall by pin for the Gators to Grant Sullivan, but Garrett Undeberg (106) would pin his opponent in the first period to give the Gators a 16-12 lead. Tony Olson (113) would lose by fall to Brock Brandon, to give the Knights an 18-16 lead, but the Gators would win six of the final eight matches to seal the dual win.

Bryce Bergeron (120) started the run, controlling his opponent Ethan Lee on top en route to an 11-5 decision. Austin Maurstad (126) followed it with a first period pin.

Avery Augustson (132) would lose by fall to the Knight's Carlos Balboa, the 120-pound North Dakota state Class A third place finisher last season, by pin in the third period, drawing the Knights to within one at 25-24.

Owen Novacek (138) would win by technical fall and Andy Dostal (145) by forfeit to give the Gators a 36-24 lead. Dade Melby (152) fell to the Knights' Chase Mullane 8-1, before the Gators' Tyler Isane (160) clinched the dual with a pin and Seth Dostal (170) secured his own pin to finish the dual.

Gators 31 Packers 33

In quarterfinal action, the Gators battled an opponent they wrestled last season-- the West Fargo Packers. In a dual going back and forth, it would come down to the final match, pitting the Gators' Colby Wooten and the Packers' Eli Gulland at 182 pounds, with the Gators leading 31-30. Wooten would grab a first period lead, taking Gulland to his back for four points. Wooten would surrender his early lead, but would have a chance to win the match, down 7-6 late in the third period. Wooten would dive in for a takedown attempt, but Gulland would sprawl back and circle around for the takedown in the waning seconds, handing the Gators the 33-31 loss.

The Gators won just six out of the 14 matches, but had a chance to win at the end thanks to four pins and falling by just decisions in four matches, including that final one.

In the first four matches of the dual, starting at 195, both teams traded pins, including Gators pins from Devin Pries and Undeberg. Olson would not generate any offense versus the Packers' Nicholas Anderson at 113, but would surrender just the three-point decision in a 7-0 loss. At 120, the Gators'

Bergeron wrestled a familiar opponent in Justin Harms. Trailing 10-2 in the third, Bergeron would escape with seconds remaining to rob a team point away from the Packers, falling to Harms 10-3.

The Gators' Maurstad would let his second period lead disappear in a 7-6 loss to Declan Genova, before Augustson and Novacek would pin their opponents to give the Gators a 24-21 lead heading into the 145 match. The Gators would find themselves on the winning side of a decision, where Andy Dostal clinched his match versus Michael Johnson with a third period takedown to win 7-4, extending the Gator team lead to six.

After Melby fell to the 138-pound North Dakota Class A 2016 state champion Jared Franek by pin at 152 pounds, the dual was tied at 28.

Tyler Isane would score a late third period takedown to turn a 8-1 decision into a 10-1 major decision over the Packers' Jackson Gravel, giving the Gators four-team points and a 32-28 lead. Seth Dostal would surrender two points in each period to the Packers' Cade Pederson, the 152-pound North Dakota state Class A fourth place finisher last season, to set up that final match of the dual.

Gators 52 Huskies 30

Facing the Wahpeton Huskies in the first match of the second day, the Gators picked up nine wins, including six pins and two forfeits, in a dual where no match went the distance except for one.

Maurstad, Novacek, Dominik Vacura, Undeberg, Olson, and Melby, picking up his first win of the young season, secured the pins for the Gators, and Augustson and Devin Pries each won by forfeit.

Olson's pin would mathematically clinch the dual at 113 pounds, giving the Gators a 48-30 lead with just one match to go. In the only match to go the distance, Bergeron would win by a 9-1 major decision to end the dual.

Gators 15 Patriots 50

Advancing to face the Bismarck Century Patriots, the Gators found themselves on the losing end of two major decisions and two decisions, and surrendered six pins en route to the loss. In the dual, the Gators won four matches, three by decision and one by pin, courtesy of Seth Dostal.

Andy Dostal would post another shutout win on the season-- defeating the Patriot's Mason Burke 3-0-- giving the Gators its first win of the dual and cutting the deficit to 10-3 at that time.

Devin Pries would also post a shutout victory-- 6-0 to give the Gators its third win of the dual. Undeberg would conclude the Gator scoring, riding out the Patriots' Hayden Johnsrud the entire third period to come out with a 2-1 victory.

Other notable matches in the dual, the Gators' only state qualifier last season, Novacek wrestled 132-pound North Dakota Class A 2016 state champion Mason Schulz at 138 pounds. Trailing 9-3 late in the third period, Novacek would surrender a takedown to Schulz to give him the eight-point major decision. Bergeron faced the Patriots' Shane Fleck, the 113-pound North Dakota state Class A runner-up last season, at 120 pounds. Tied at zero after one, Bergeron eventually fell 5-0.

Gators 36 Packers 40

In the fifth place match, the Gators faced off against the Packers for the second time in as many days. Although this dual wouldn't come down to the last match, the Gators would win seven matches in a dual where both teams shifted their lineups some.

This time around, the Gators' allowed the Packers' to clinch the dual in the second to the final match, after Maurstad fell by a 9-1 major decision to the Packers' Justin Harms, putting the Gators in a 40-30 deficit heading into the final match, one that did feature some drama.

Trailing by one late in the period, Brandon Pries (132) scored an escape to tie the match versus the Packers' Declan Genova and send it into overtime. In the extra period, Pries would score the takedown, but in the process take Genova to his back and pin him to end the Gator weekend on a win.

The Gators picked up two other pins courtesy of Undeberg and Bergeron and two forfeit victories from Novacek and Devin Pries.

Also picking up wins, the Gators' Andy Dostal defeated Michael Johnson for the second time on the weekend, surrendering an escape with just seconds remaining and holding on for the 4-3 victory. At 113, Olson picked up his second win of the day, scoring three back points on the Packers' Max Kringlie late in the third period to pull out the 5-2 win.

Also of note, the Packers flipped around the outcome of one match up from the teams' previous dual. At 160, the Gators' Isane led in the second period, but the Packers' Jackson Gravel would catch and pin him in a cradle with 13 seconds remaining in the second period.

On the weekend, the Gators' Devin Pries and Garrett Undeberg each finished 5-0. Owen Novacek and Andy Dostal went 4-1, and Bryce Bergeron finished with the final winning record on the weekend, going 3-2.

The junior high and junior varsity wrestlers also competed at Grand Forks the Central that weekend. Wrestling for the Gators in the junior varsity portion on Friday, Dale Grindahl finished 2-1, Brandon Pries 3-1, Derrick Corneliusen 3-1, Joe Dezelar 2-2, Tristan Locken 1-1, Jacob Bergsnev 0-2, Kobe Dostal 0-2, and Colten Gust 0-2. Competing in the junior high portion Saturday, Ryan Hlucny finished 3-3, Caleb Vacura 2-0, Ethan Waage 2-0, and Cauy Hasbrouck, Nathan Waage and Dawson Beito each 2-1.

With a 3-3 dual mark, the Gators would head back to the practice room for one day before hosting its second home match of the season-- this one versus Pembina County North on Tuesday, December 13, a team the Gators fell to in dual action, but also defeated at the Larimore individual tourney, last season. The Gator wrestlers then complete their pre-holiday schedule by traveling to Cass Lake, Minn., for the annual Big Bear Tournament on December 16 and 17.

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