



Sports

Girtz becomes key cog in MSU wrestling machine

Maverick senior ranked sixth in nation for D-II

By Jim Rueda
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MANKATO — After his freshman year of high school, Forest Lake's Brandon Girtz decided to put away his hockey stick and start doing some serious snowmobiling during the winter months.

Before he could actually do it, however, he was talked into going out for wrestling by head coach Bob Dettmer. Dettmer's powers of persuasion have turned out to be quite a coup for the Minnesota State University wrestling program.

Girtz didn't exactly etch his name into the high school record books at Forest Lake. He qualified for state only once — his senior year — lost his first match and was eliminated right away.

"The recruiters weren't banging down my door," Girtz admitted. "I really didn't intend to give up hockey for wrestling, it just worked out that way. The coach thought I'd be good at it and my dad thought it was a good idea, too."

With a love for wrestling instilled in him, Girtz narrowed his college choices to Minnesota Duluth, Wisconsin-Stout and Minnesota State. Since MSU was the only one of the three that offered wrestling, he enrolled in Mankato and thought he might try to walk on to the program.

Head coach Jim Makovsky



Pat Christman

Minnesota State University's Brandon Girtz is looking to cap his senior season with both an individual and team national championship.

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BRANDON GIRTZ,
 MSU senior wrestler

is grateful he did. Although Girtz has gone through his share of growing pains, he has become one of the top wrestlers on the team.

He qualified for nationals last year as a junior and is now ranked sixth in Division II at 157 pounds as a senior. He has a 28-7 record with most of those losses coming against Division I competition. Girtz will put that record to the test tonight when he is matched up against Travis Eggers of Upper Iowa.

"One of Brandon's most obvious traits is his stubbornness," Makovsky said. "That can be a great asset or it can be your biggest weakness. Brandon has learned how to channel the stubbornness and makes it work for him in a positive manner."

Makovsky likens Girtz to the little kid who sits down in front of the box that requires him to put certain shapes into matching holes in the box.

"When he got here, Brandon was the kind of guy that was

going to make that circle fit into the space for the triangle no matter what," Makovsky said. "He was sort of stubborn to a fault."

But as Girtz matured and learned new moves, he began winning. He's still way behind most of his teammates in terms of technique and overall wrestling knowledge, but he makes up for it with persistence.

"A lot of guys I wrestle have much better technique than I do," Girtz said. "But I just have this drive to win. I really don't like to lose."

Makovsky agrees: "He doesn't quit, he doesn't give up. If his stuff isn't working, he'll try something else. Now, instead of trying to force in that circle, he'll look for the triangle."