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# Sports

West/Loyola opens  
season Thursday



## MINNESOTA STATE WRESTLING PREVIEW



Pat Christman

Minnesota State University junior Travis Krinkie (facing) works on his takedowns with John Koons at the MSU wrestling room. Krinkie is one of six ranked wrestlers for the Mavericks entering the season.

# Sheriff of the mat

**MSU's Krinkie rated No. 1 nationally at 174 pounds; team comes in ranked No. 2**

By Jim Rueda  
Free Press Sports Editor

**MANKATO** — When the preseason rankings came out for Division II wrestling last week, junior Travis Krinkie of the Minnesota State squad was ranked first in the nation at 174 pounds.

A few days later, Krinkie was approached by a reporter and asked to give his opinion about being rated No. 1. His response was typical for a guy who has developed into the ultimate team player.

"I was?" he said. "I heard the rankings came out but I didn't look at them. It doesn't matter anyway because you still have to prove yourself every time you take the mat."

Proving himself is something Krinkie has had to do since high school. Blue Earth Area won back-to-back state championships in 2001-02 and Krinkie was one of the least-recruited guys on a squad that included Jeff Pfaffinger, Jared Evans and the Eustice brothers — Luke and Ty.

"I went to a high school meet to see Evans wrestle and that's when Travis caught my eye," MSU coach Jim Makovsky remembers. "I ended up recruiting him, too. Evans was the guy I really wanted but Travis is the guy we got."

Both wrestlers have flourished at the college level. Evans is having a fine career at Division III Augsburg, having helped the Auggies to a national championship last season where he finished seventh individually.

Krinkie has blossomed at MSU. The two-time All-American went 31-8 last season and has put together a 51-14 career record for the Mavs. The record includes a runner-up finish at the Division II national tournament last year and an eighth-place finish the previous season.

Makovsky says the secret to Krinkie's success is no secret at all. He possesses the three ingredients that often mold athletes into winners.

"He has a great attitude, he's an excellent athlete and he's a tireless

*"(Travis Krinkie is) kind of like the old west sheriff who doesn't say much but you don't want to cross. Sort of like Clint Eastwood in 'The Outlaw Josey Wales.' He didn't talk very much in that movie but when it came time to kick somebody's butt, he took care of it."*

JIM MAKOVSKY,  
Minnesota State wrestling coach

worker. In the practice room he's kind of like the old west sheriff who doesn't say much but you don't want to cross.

"Sort of like Clint Eastwood in 'The Outlaw Josey Wales.' He didn't talk very much in that movie but when it came time to kick somebody's butt, he took care of it."

Krinkie believes the goal of just about everybody in the MSU wrestling room is to win an individual national championship. And that, he

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## MSU: Mavericks have five ranked wrestlers

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says, will lead to success for the Mavericks as a whole.

"If everybody works at achieving their goals, the team will take care of itself," he said. "We're determined to win a national team title."

MSU goes into the season ranked second in the country. The biggest question mark heading into the campaign is the health of junior Jason Rhoten who is ranked second at 149 pounds in the preseason poll.

Rhoten is coming off a broken femur he suffered in a golf cart accident last spring. He had a titanium rod inserted in his right leg and has only recently been cleared to resume full-contact wrestling.

MSU has four other ranked wrestlers in this year's lineup. Nick Smith is rated fourth at 125 pounds, North Dakota State transfer Zach Stephens is seventh at 141, Mathias Bitz is third at 157 and John Koons is fifth at 184.

The other projected starters

are junior Efrain Ayala at 133, junior Jeremiah Nowak at 157, Waseca junior Ben Janike at 195 and transfer Tim Kraemer from North Dakota State at heavyweight.

In addition to Stephens and Kraemer, Andy Pickar comes to MSU from North Dakota State. Pfaffinger is also on board after transferring from the University of Iowa and Jeremy Sogge came to the Mavericks from Ridgewater Community College.

"Every one of our transfers comes to (us) with great credentials," Makovsky said. "We're not the best team in the nation right now, but that is our mission."

"(Defending national champion and top-ranked) Nebraska-Omaha is the team to beat and there are several quality teams in Division II that are right on their tail. There are a bunch of other teams, including us, that would like to knock them off their throne."

MSU opens the season Wednesday with a dual meet at St. John's in Collegeville.