



Thursday,
April 13, 2006

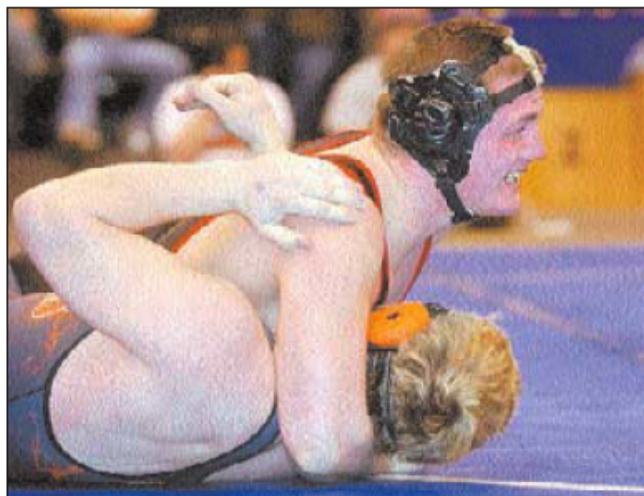
www.mankatofreepress.com

Sports



Mavs sign three area wrestlers in hopes of catching UNO

St. James senior Justin Schwanz ended his 2006 high school career with a state championship at 215 pounds. Schwanz was one of three area wrestlers to sign letters of intent to attend MSU next fall.



Pat Christman

Don't look now, but one of the top small college wrestling teams in the nation just got better.

Minnesota State University wrestling coach Jim Makovsky usually takes a wait-and-see approach when it comes to new crops of recruits, but the veteran mentor found it hard to contain his enthusiasm Wednesday when talking about this year's group of incoming freshmen.

Makovsky landed three talented wrestlers this week—all from south central Minnesota. Travis Elg of Windom/Mountain Lake-Butterfield-Odin, Justin Schwanz of St. James and Andy

Forstner of Madelia-Truman have each signed national letters of intent to attend MSU in the fall.

All boast excellent high school credentials and should have a chance to make an immediate impact.

"This is a great start for us," Makovsky said while trying to hold back a smile. "We hope to bring in a few more guys but all three of the kids (we signed today) have the potential to be very good college wrestlers."

Elg may be the coup of the incoming trio as many expected him to end up at a Division I



**JIM
RUEDA**
Free Press

Please see RUEDA, Page D3

RUEDA: Forstner 40-0 this year

Continued from Page D1

school next season. He's a three-time state champion with a career record of 193-11. A varsity wrestler since eighth grade, the two years he did not win state he placed fourth (at 103 pounds as an eighth-grader) and third (at 135 pounds as a junior).

Of his 193 victories, 123 came via falls. The five-time All-Southwest Conference wrestler is also a four-time All-American, placing fifth last year and seventh two weeks ago at NHSCA Senior Nationals.

Elg said his decision to attend MSU was the result of a combination of things.

"They have a tough program, and I like that it's close to home," he said. "My friends and family can come up and watch me wrestle whenever they want. And (MSU) offered me pretty good (scholarship) money,

too."

Schwanz is a two-time state champion from St. James at 215 pounds. He was 74-4 over his last two seasons with 46 pins. Schwanz, who boasts a high school career record of 112-31, has consistently placed in the top five nationally in both freestyle and Greco-Roman dating back to 1997. Justin joins his older brother Jared who plays football at MSU.

Forstner is the second-winningest wrestler in Madelia-Truman history with a record of 171-29. The four-time All-Valley Conference competitor won the 119-pound Class A state championship this past season with a 40-0 record. He was second two years ago at 112 pounds.

Makovsky said one of the reasons he likes this trio of wrestlers is their backgrounds. "Each of them comes from a family that really supported them and their wrestling," he said. "These

guys all come from within 45 miles of Mankato, and they bring some name recognition to our program."

It's no secret that Makovsky wants to move his program up a notch on a par with three-time defending national champion University of Nebraska-Omaha. He believes a recruiting class that includes Elg, Schwanz and Forstner is a step in that direction.

"We've been 30-5 in dual meets the last two years and four of the losses have come against UNO," he said. "We've had a lot of close meets with them that we might have been able to win if we could have taken just two more matches. We're hoping this will help get us there."

Jim Rueda is the Free Press sports editor. To contact him, call 344-6381 or e-mail him at jrueda@mankatofreepress.com.