

New Xavier coach learned from Gable

Written by Jim Ecker

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Ryan Chambers wrestled for the best coach in the history of the sport at the University of Iowa.

Now he wants to translate what he learned from Dan Gable into the wrestling program at Xavier High School.

"I learned how to be intense and work hard," said Chambers, who lettered at Iowa from 1992 to 1994 when the Hawkeyes won two NCAA titles. "You earn what you get, you earn what you work for. That's really about it."

Chambers succeeded Craig Kadlec as the head coach this season, but he's no stranger to Xavier wrestling. He was one of Xavier's assistant coaches for two years and also has worked extensively with the Future Saints wrestling program.

Chambers knows that the vast majority of high school wrestlers are not going to compete in college, so his goal is not spitting out future NCAA champions.

"My goal is to turn them into great young men," he said. "Wrestling is one of those sports that teaches you how to achieve goals and push your limits."

"I think it's going to be simple, and that's what I'm doing here. I'm pushing kids to new heights they've felt already."

The Saints have 41 wrestlers on the team this year, which is 10 more than last season. Chambers is also the freshman football coach at Xavier and has been able to steer some of those young athletes into the wrestling program.

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"I think that's helped," he said. "We have a good ninth grade class."

Chambers has known many of his wrestlers since they were little kids, competing for the Future Saints. "They know the coach, they know the system and they know what my expectations are," he said.

Xavier lost its only state qualifier from last year's team when Braxton Chicchelly joined the outstanding program at Wartburg College after placing fourth at 130 pounds. Chambers feels he has talented wrestlers on the squad and has been happily surprised with some of the upsets in wrestle-offs for varsity spots.

"We're going to be solid," he said. "I think for the first time in a long time we'll have a full lineup.

"We're really impressed with these kids and their work ethic. They do everything you ask without complaining, with a smile on their face."

The Saints will be severely tested in their season opener Thursday night when they compete in a double-dual with Iowa City West and Linn-Mar at the Linn-Mar gym.

"We'll have a tough bite on Thursday," Chambers said. "But I think we're going to better.

"It's not going to happen overnight, by any means. We have kids in the room who are quite capable of doing good things.

"I hope that other coaches and other teams see a new era and a new discipline of wrestling for Xavier. I think we do have some really intense kids," Chambers said.

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"My philosophy is simply battle from the first whistle to the end of the match. Very intense."

Xavier finished 8-24 in dual meets last season, including 1-12 in the Mississippi Valley Conference. The top returning grapplers are Nick Drahozal (29-16 last year), Jack Boland (23-17) and Chantz Rodriguez (18-6).