

Burrell leads Wash grapplers into new year

Written by Jim Ecker

Monday, 28 November 2011 19:39 - Last Updated Monday, 28 November 2011 23:02



Tyler Burrell had a successful season for the Cedar Rapids Washington wrestling team last year when he placed sixth at heavyweight at the Class 3A state tournament.

Washington Coach Matt Hatcher thinks Burrell can finish even higher this season and might be able to compete for a state title, although it's a tough weight class.

"He's right in there. He's in the mix," Hatcher said.

The Burrell family knows something about winning state heavyweight titles. Brandon Burrell, Tyler's older brother, won the 285-pound championship as a senior in 2009. He's wrestling now at Central College in Pella.

"Both Burrell boys got progressively bigger every year, bigger and stronger every year," Hatcher said. "They kind of grew up and grew into their bodies and got a lot tougher mentally and became a little bit better athletes."

Tyler Burrell had a successful season with the Washington football team this year and enters the wrestling campaign as a confident athlete. "Confidence always helps," Hatcher said. "He wants to be right up there."

"He's like a silent giant," Hatcher said. "He doesn't say a whole lot, but he can be pretty tough when he puts his mind to it."

The Warriors feature four state qualifiers this season with Burrell (32-9 at heavyweight), Kaiser Herz (21-18 at 140 pounds), Jordan Eicher (17-19 at 125 pounds) and Trey Schuler (21-13 at 103 pounds).

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Herz, Eicher and Schuler did not place at the state meet and Washington tied for 40th place in the team standings. Hatcher would like to see the Warriors improve on that finish and thinks they have a chance.

"The kids are a year older, a year better," he said. "I feel good going in with these kids."

Hatcher enters his 10th year as Washington's head coach with approximately 40 wrestlers on the team. He said this is the most confidence he's had in the team since he began.

The Warriors did not graduate any varsity wrestlers from last season and Hatcher thinks he might be able to fill all 14 weight classes this year, with no forfeits (or maybe just one).

"The depth is nice to have, because we've never really had depth before," he said.

Herz was bothered in preseason workouts by an injury and illness, but will be aiming for 145 pounds this season. Eicher is headed for 126 or 132 pounds, while Schuler is aiming for 113 or 120.

Washington begins the season with a double-dual Tuesday night against Maquoketa and Marion at Marion High School.

"I'm excited. I'm looking forward to the year," Hatcher said. "The coaches are looking forward to it, the kids are looking forward to it, the parents are looking forward to it. It will be exciting, that's for sure."