

Three new members of 100 Win Club

Written by Jim Ecker

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There's a sign on the wall in the Kennedy wrestling room that lists all the members of the "100 Win Club" in school history, but it's time to add a few names.

Seniors Luke Kremer, Shane Williams and Ryan Rodriguez have joined the exclusive fraternity that now includes 10 men. Kremer cracked the century mark last season, while Williams and Rodriguez made it this season.

"It's a pretty cool thing to do," Rodriguez said Tuesday before practice. "I've been wrestling my whole life, so it's something you can say you achieved."

Kremer has climbed to fourth on the list with a career mark of 129-25. Williams is tied for seventh with a four-year record of 110-45 and Rodriguez is ninth at 104-56.

Williams is tied with Kennedy Coach Brent Paulson for seventh place with 110 wins, so he's about to knock his own coach down a peg in the all-time standings.

Joey Slaton tops the chart at 165-11, followed by Kyle Blood (151-29) and Zach Paulson (146-29). Kremer passed Ryan Sheldon (127-43) and Mike Russell (128-42) last weekend at the Clinton tournament to jump from sixth to fourth.

Justin Hauge is the 10th member of the "100 Win Club" at 100-44.

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Kremer qualified for the state tournament as a freshman, finished sixth as a sophomore and placed third as a junior. Naturally, he's looking to move up again and hopes to reach the top step of the victory stand at the state tournament in Des Moines next month.

"It's definitely something to shoot for," said Kremer, who is ranked third at 132 pounds. "I guess my chances are just as good as anybody else that's out there."

All three Cougars have been wrestling since they were in the first or second grade. They enjoy the sport and enjoy being successful.

"I like to win," said Williams, who is ranked sixth at 160 pounds. "I like knowing that your hard work paid off and you go out and dominate somebody."

Kremer said he began wrestling when he was six years old and enjoyed it from the start. "In my pictures I was smiling," he said.

These days he keeps a fairly stoic expression when he's competing. "It's just how I am," he said. "I just feel like you look kind of goofy if you celebrate all the time, especially in not big matches."

Rodriguez, who wrestles at 138 pounds, moved to Iowa from Colorado when he was in grade school. He said he appreciates what he's learned from the demanding sport.

"I think it teaches you a lot of lessons," he said. "It's one of the few sports than can teach you a lot of things, like dedication and toughness and all those kind of things. I guess it helps develop you into an adult, and it's nice to go out there and dominate kids."

Kremer enjoys the self-satisfaction that comes with the sport. "Just getting respect from people who know wrestling well and know how hard it is," he said.

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Rodriguez qualified for the state tournament in 2010 and 2011, but did not place either year. He'd like to change that next month and finish his career with a medal.

"Just getting on the podium is what I'm focused on this year," he said. "I'll try to do everything I can to make it happen."

Williams was a state qualifier in 2009 and 2010, but finished third in the district meet last year and did not make it to Des Moines. He'd like to get a medal as well.

"Place as high as I can and maybe beat some guys I'm not supposed to beat and surprise some people down in Des Moines and go as high as I can on the podium," he remarked.

Kennedy will wrestle in the Mississippi Valley Conference meet this Saturday at Iowa City West with Kremer, Rodriguez and Williams all aiming for the top.

"Saturday is important, but we really want to peak at the state tournament," said Williams. "We haven't always wrestled our best at the state tournament as a team, so we want to max together and go as high as we can on the podium."