

Wrestling Begins Season Saturday

By: Kevin Meinholz, Sports Information Director

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EAU CLAIRE, Wis. (UWECBlugolds.com) - The UW-Eau Claire wrestling team, under first-year head coach Russ Peloquin, will kick off the season Saturday with a dual meet at Lakeland College.

Peloquin, who was named head coach last spring, returns a solid group this season. Back are a number of starters from last year's squad.

Joe Pitsch (Jr.-Oshkosh, Wis./North) (285) and **Craig Eckelberg** (Jr.-Tomah, Wis.) (165) will serve as team captains. Pitsch, who played football the last two years, did not go out this season, deciding to focus on wrestling instead. Eckelberg will be battling with three freshmen, **Nathan Bowe** (Fr.-Nekoosa, Wis.) and **James Hennick** (Fr.-Eau Claire, Wis./North) for the starting spot at 165 pounds. Bowe was a place winner at the WIAA State High School Wrestling meet last year.

At 125 **Neil Manns** (So.-Columbia Heights, Minn.) will be returning from an injury that held him out of competition last season.

At 133 **JT Bernstein** (So.-Highland Park, Ill.), who started at 125 last year, will be competing for the starting spot with **Steven Fisher** (Fr.-Greenfield, Wis.) and **Brandon Schreiber** (Fr.-Mondovi, Wis.).

At 141 **Zach Weisenberger** (Jr.-Ladysmith, Wis.) is the returning starter from last year. Weisenberger will compete for the starting spot with five of his teammates. **Brian Reier** (Jr.-Stillwater, Minn.), who was a starter last year at 133, has moved up a weight class. **Ryan Seidler** (So.-Adams, Wis./Adams-Friendship), a transfer from Augsburg College (Minn.), is looking very good in the pre-season and will challenge for a spot. **Matt Barney** (So.-Clear Lake, Wis.) and **Kyle Heise** (Fr.-Green Bay, Wis./Fox Valley Lutheran) are also competing for the starting role at 141.

Joshua Baier (So.-Inver Grove Heights, Minn./Rosemount) has moved up from 141 to 149 this year for the Blugolds after putting on a lot of muscle mass over the summer.

Ricky Gonzales (So.-Bluffton, S.C.) and **Levi Polus** (Jr.-Winona, Minn.) will be moving down to 157 pounds from 165 pounds where they competed last season. Both Gonzales and Polus started matches for the Blugolds last season at 165. **Jose De La Barrera** (Fr.-Beloit, Wis./Memorial) and **Jacob Hoffstatter** (Fr.-Stanley, Wis./Stanley-Boyd) will also be fighting for a starting spot at 157 pounds. De LaBerra was a place winner in the WIAA State High School Wrestling meet last year.

At 174 pounds, **Keith Dawson** (Jr.-Neillsville, Wis.) will be leading the way. Dawson was a starter the entire year in 2009-2010. **Ethan Gusek** (Fr.-Golden Valley, Minn./Robbinsdale Armstrong), will also be competing at 174 pounds.

Will Christ (Jr.-Shell Lake, Wis.) is back at 184 pounds after being the starter last season. **Tyler Kennedy** (So.-Cottage Grove, Minn./Park) and **Matthew Rieckhoff** (Fr.-Wausau, Wis./D.C. Everest) will also be competing for the starting role at 184.

Luke Ortscheid (Fr.-Wausau, Wis./West) will be the 197 pound starter for the Blugolds this season.

The Blugolds will be tested on the road this year as they will only compete at home three times. Their first home match is January 12 and will follow that up with one on January 15. On February 12, the Blugolds will return home one more time to host the annual Blugold Invitational.