

New local wrestling club formed

Open club formed by Sanderson to help train area wrestlers in all skill levels

From staff reports

Just like soccer and basketball players, local wrestlers now have their own area sports club. This past February, Haywood County Wrestling Club (HCWC) formed under the direction of head coach John Sanderson.

“Coaches and parents saw a need for wrestlers to train during the spring and fall, when school programs are not active,” said Coach Sanderson. “And now that I’m retired, it seemed like a good time to start up a wrestling club. Last February, we held an organization meeting that was very well attended, and now we have a club with about 50 wrestlers working out two evenings a week.”

Sanderson, who recently retired as principal of Central Elementary in Waynesville, is no stranger to wrestling in the county. He has been head wrestling coach at both Tuscola High (1981-1985) and Pisgah High (1987-1991), and has been an active wrestling official as well. He was even named NC Wrestling Coach of the Year in 1977 while at Cary High School.

The club was formed to help train area wrestlers in the second through 12th grades, and is open to wrestlers of all skill levels. “Our club is staffed entirely by volunteers, so we can offer a high-quality program that is affordable for area athletes interested in the sport,” said Coach Sanderson. In addition to the weekly training sessions, wrestlers have the option to attend area tournaments that are sanctioned by the state wrestling association.

The club coaching staff includes middle school coaches Jackie Roten, T.J. Kirkpatrick, plus assistant high school coaches Chip Singleton, Mark Williams, and Erik Bottoms. All are experienced coaches, able to teach the skills and tactics of

wrestling at the highest level. “We are extremely fortunate to have such a talented group of coaches working with the club”, said Sanderson.

The club currently holds training sessions twice a week on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. (See the club web site, <http://main.nc.us/haywoodwrestling>, for details.) The coaches stress that wrestling is an excellent way for young people to stay fit and active. In this club, nobody is cut from the team and nobody sits on the bench. All wrestlers can participate, both at practices and in tournaments.

The club’s first tournament was the Warhorse Stampede at Owen HS on March 21st. About 19 wrestlers competed and most earned a top-three finish. “I heard a lot of positive comments from other wrestlers and coaches about our wrestlers. We looked sharp with our new club t-shirts, and we also performed quite well on the mats,” said Sanderson.

Finishing in first place in their weight classes were Justin Smith, Austin Browning, Clay Wightman, Adam Silvers, Sherrill Rathbone, Chris Smith, and Kris Haney. Second place finishers were Noah Burnette, Austin Smiley, and Josh Owen. Hunter Trull, James Gibson, Jacob Kielson, Zakk Duvall, Zach Prickett, Chris Sanderson, and Brandon Reece all earned a third place.

The next tournament up for the club will be the Cherokee Life Challenge on May 9, in Cherokee. For more information about the new club, contact HCWC head coach John Sanderson at 734-0299, or visit the club’s web page at: <http://main.nc.us/haywoodwrestling>