

Experience is key for talented Road Crew team

By Pete Mohs
Echo Journal

The Pequot Lakes/Pine River-Backus Road Crew wrestling team returns 31 wrestlers with varsity experience, including the entire starting lineup, after reaching the Class 2-A state tournament last year for the first time since 2014.

"We are returning our entire starting lineup and have a ton of experience in our room," said Road Crew head coach Travis Hoffarth. "We have our goals set on another Section 8-2A title, and continue to develop our program. We want to be consistently knocking on the door (as section contenders)."

Two of those returning starters are returning Class 2-A state individual qualifiers Connor Tulenchik, a two-time state individual runner-up, and Owen Carlson, who finished in the top eight at state last year.

Carlson and Tulenchik advanced to the state championship round as juniors following state preliminary and Section 8-2A action. Tulenchik (40-2 overall) finished second at state after losing to Adam Sylvester of Totino Grace 11-3 in the final. Carlson (37-4) lost to Nolan Reiter of Big Lake 8-5 in the quarterfinals and was pinned by Zach Pribyl of Annandale/Maple Lake in the consolation semifinals.

Last year as a team, the Road Crew lost to Princeton 47-21 in the Class 2-A quarterfinals in their first state appearance since 2014. The Road Crew, which



Ashley Smith / Echo Journal Correspondent

The Road Crew wrestling team runs in the hall, led by their captains, during the team's first week of practice.

finished 29-5 overall, advanced to state as the No. 2 seed by defeating top-seeded Thief River Falls 43-25 in the section final.

"We really had a special season by setting a program record for victories (29) and winning the Mid-State Conference and Section 8-2A

championships," Hoffarth said. "We eventually fell to a good Princeton team in the first round of state. Even with all of those memories

that were made, we felt like the kids missed out on sharing their season with our fans and getting to experience a 'true' state tournament

experience (because of COVID) as we were not able to go compete at the Xcel Energy Center in St. Paul. That will be an added incentive to build on from last season."

Other letterwinners include: Caleb Ruhl, Austin Staricha, Finnegan O'Dell, Corbin Knapp, Matthew Foster, Trey Tuchtenhagen, Max Trumpol, Payton Scott, Brady Ruhl, Riley Peters, James Cummings, Chance Abramham, Karsen Kinyon, Korey Kinyon, Caleb Swenson, Sean Kilpatrick, Tayten Mick, Quentin Ellsworth, Eli Abraham, Earl Stockman, Vance Wannebo, Paxton Goddard, Easton Miller, Noah Mejdrich, Owen Dabill, Parker Zutter, Nic Foster, Lake Mongan and Dennis Rahm.

"Our kids know what it takes, but they have never come into the season with a bullseye on their back," Hoffarth said about being defending section champions. "We expect to get our opponents' best every time we touch the mat. If we can embrace that mentality and control the things we can control such as our academics and effort at each practice, I like our chances."

Tom Demars, Justin Franke, Pat Foster and Alex Diaz are assistant coaches for the Road Crew, who were 4-0 in Mid-State matches last year. The Road Crew has compiled an admirable 207-81 record over the past 11 seasons that Hoffarth has been head coach.

"Our kids know what it takes, but they have never come into the season with a bullseye on their back. We expect to get our opponents' best every time we touch the mat. If we can embrace that mentality and control the things we can control such as our academics and effort at each practice, I like our chances."

TRAVIS HOFFARTH, ROAD CREW HEAD COACH

Good Luck Athletes

CROSSLAKE COMMUNICATIONS
218-692-2777

ECTC
218-763-3000

Road Crew wrestling

December
2 - Road Crew at Deer River triangular 5 p.m.
4 - Road Crew at Wadena-DC invitational 10:30 a.m.
10 - Mora, Nashwauk-Keewatin at Road Crew (PL) 5 p.m.
14 - Road Crew at Alexandria triangular 5 p.m.
17 - Road Crew at Cass Lake-Bena Invitational 11 a.m.

18 - Road Crew at Cass Lake-Bena Invitational 10 a.m.
21 - Road Crew quadrangular (PR-B) 4 p.m.
January
4 - Thief River Falls, UNC at Road Crew (PR-B) 5 p.m.
7 - Road Crew at Osakis tournament 2:30 p.m.
8 - Road Crew at Minnewaska invitational 10 a.m.
11 - Road Crew at Virginia triangular 5 p.m.

14 - Road Crew at Lake Park-Audubon invitational, TBD
21 - Road Crew at Staples-Motley (Mid-State), 1 p.m.
27 - Road Crew at Milaca triangular 5 p.m.
28 - Brainerd, Mpls. North at Road Crew (PL) 4 p.m.
February
3 - Road Crew at Fergus Falls invitational, TBD
15 & 18 - Road Crew at section team (DL), TBD
25-26 - Road Crew at section individuals (Melrose), TBD

COUNTRY DOC VETERINARY CLINIC

Dr. Kyle Adkins, DVM
5508 County Road 1
Pine River, MN 56474
Phone: 218-587-4196
Fax: 218-587-2491



www.veterinariancountrydocpineriver.com

Good Luck this Season, Athletes!



On 371 & the Paul Bunyan Trail a mile south of the light in Pine River
218-587-2564

Find us on Facebook

GOOD LUCK Patriots!

Open Mon-Fri. 9-5:30, Sat. 9-1
Crosslake DRUG

Crosslake Town Square
218-692-2502

Steve Kappes
Registered Pharmacist



Good Luck Tiger Athletes

GARDINER'S HARDWARE & FURNITURE

587-2585

Downtown Pine River

First National Bank

Member FDIC
Equal Housing Lender

fnbnorth.com

Like us on Facebook

Clasen & Schiessl CPAs, Ltd.
Consultants & Accountants

Good Luck to all the area athletes!

GOLDEN HORIZONS

22 assisted living apartments
13 memory care suites

16631 East Shore Rd | Crosslake, MN | 218-692-6650

Apartment available now!

DRIVE SAFELY!

Paul's LARGE GARAGE
BODY & PAINT

Call For Appointment 218-587-2290
Open: Mon. - Fri. 8 am to 5 pm
Hwy 371S. (1 mi. So. of Pine River)

BARSTOCK LIQUORS

Crosby • Crosslake • Pine River

GOOD LUCK ATHLETES

Good luck to all the area athletes!

GOLDEN HORIZONS

22 assisted living apartments
13 memory care suites

16631 East Shore Rd | Crosslake, MN | 218-692-6650

Apartment available now!