

Thor named Wrestling Club of Year

•Also earns state Freestyle, Greco titles; Pesch is Coach of Year



By Scott Thoma
Mascot Staff Writer

The Thor Wrestling Club was named the Minnesota Club of the Year for the second time in three years recently at the annual MN/USA Banquet in Lakeville.

Thor, the Norse God of Thunder, was selected as the club name due to the connection with the Minneota Vikings since the club is based in Minneota.

Thor was also named the Greco and Freestyle State Champions at the banquet. And J.D. Pesch was named Coach of the Year.

Brock Buysse and Steve Banks of Minneota, and Eric Rose of Morris are the other coaches.

"It's an honor to be recognized for the time that goes into (coaching)," Pesch said. "I always think it's odd that there's an award for Coach of the Year."

"It should be 'Coaches' of the Year. All of Thor's coaches put in a lot of time and are very passionate about the sport and our club."

There are over 90 clubs in Minnesota.

"The kids from Southwest Minnesota love competing and placing above the AAA schools across the state," Pesch noted.

The various awards are announced in the fall based on points accumulated by each club throughout the season and tallied when all national events are completed.

The majority of the points are amassed from the state tournament in May. Additional points are awarded for wrestlers qualifying for state teams and by competing in regional and national events throughout the season.

The Thor Wrestling Club, which just completed its fourth year, is comprised of 90 wrestlers from ages five to 19 from Minneota, Canby, Tyler, United, Pipestone, Marshall, Redwood Falls, Granite Falls, Dawson-Boyd, Madison, Hancock and Morris.

"We care about any wrestlers who join our club, no matter where they are from," Pesch insisted. "Once the high school season ends and kids sign up for Thor, we are all one team."

Thor also gets assistance from Dayna Johnson of Dawson-Boyd with organizing, ordering, travel arrangements, and running the Thor Facebook page. Dan "Peanuts" Kloos also assists with traveling, results, and individual registrations.

In its first year, Thor had 54 wrestlers; 32 of them from Minneota.

In 2017, the club grew to 72 wrestlers and collected its first Club of the Year honors, while also being named the Greco State Champions (four individual state champions), as well as coming in third in Freestyle (four individual champions).

A season ago, Thor had 103 wrestlers and the club was named the Freestyle State Champions.

"The older kids love helping the younger ones," said Pesch. "Sometimes, the younger ones 'coach' the high school kids."

Freestyle/Greco wrestling is much more prevalent in the metro area, Pesch noted.

"There are just a few out-state clubs," he said. "I had been coaching and founded two Freestyle/Greco Clubs in Belle Plaine and LeSueur over the past 20 years."

"I saw an opportunity to start a fresh club here in Southwest Minnesota. Wrestling is popular in this area and wrestlers and families are committed to success."

The Thor wrestlers practice two nights a week from mid-March through May, while competing in several tournaments across the state.

"Unlike many other clubs, we focus on Freestyle/Greco Style wrestling," Pesch said. "These are the two styles of wrestling in the Olympics."

"Folkstyle is high school/collegiate wrestling. USA is the only place in the world with Folkstyle. The rest of the world does Freestyle/Greco. The kids can choose which style they wrestle. We encourage them to do both."

Photos Page 9



Lisa Gillund (running center of photo) qualified for the Boston Marathon.
Photos provided by Brian Jeremiason.

Gillund finds fifth time is the charm

Continued from Page 1

In addition to Lisa Gillund, several other local runners competed on Sunday. Shelby Corbin also ran the full marathon, finishing in 5:37.14.

Five others were in the 10-mile run; Bruce Bossuyt finished in 1:29.56, Davett Jeremiason, 1:34.47; Travis Gillund, 1:46.12; Brian Jeremiason, 2:01.27; and Jami Bossuyt, 2:01.45.

Gillund said she will next run the New York City Marathon for the first time on Nov. 4 after being selected through its lottery system.

Last year, Gillund trained with the mindset of 3:50 being the qualifying time for the Boston Marathon and even hired a running coach from New York that she worked with online. But late in the season, the Boston Marathon's qualifying time was lowered to 3:40.

Gillund finished with a 3:53.18 last year, admitting that she didn't feel 3:40 was within her reach, although she likely could have pushed herself to reach 3:50 if that had still been the qualifying time.

So this year was her best chance, she felt.

Over a three-month training period, she estimates that she runs "around 600 miles", alternating distances and speeds on certain days.

Gillund runs in the country and has her own little cheering section, like Rocky Balboa.

"The farmers all know I run out there and they will wave or honk as I go by," she laughed.

She also loves running the Twin Cities Marathon more than any race because of the scenery and people along the way.

"We start running at U.S. Bank Stadium and then run through downtown Minneapolis and around all the lakes," she said. "We run past these beautiful historic homes and the streets are lined with people cheering."

As the runners get within two-tenths of a mile from the finish line at the State Capitol, they get a view of a mammoth American flag waving in the breeze.

"It's hard to explain but when you see that massive flag it's such a feeling of excitement and such a feeling of accomplishment," she said. "There are still two-tenths of a mile to go in the race, but that flag kinds of inspires you to the finish line."

So determined to qualify for the Boston Marathon in her fifth try, Gillund shifted gears near the conclusion and averaged a 7:20 mile over the final three-tenths of a mile, while she had averaged an 8:30 mile over the first 25.9 miles of the race.

Gillund/Page 10

Rivalry dissipates under Vikes firepower

By Byron Higgin
Mascot Sports Editor

Canby against Minneota.

There's always extra meaning behind that phrase. "They come fired up against us," said Minneota hitter, digger, server Abby Hennen. "They have beat some good competition," Hennen added.

The rivalry is real, and as Hennen said, "The gym is always loud."

Tuesday night, the No. three-ranked Vikings took on the No. 10-ranked Canby Lancers with a 17-5 record. Canby was 9-1 in the Camden and Minneota 11-0 coming into the match.

When it was over, Minneota still had not been pressed past a three-game set this entire year against Camden Conference foes, winning 25-17; 25-15 and 25-21.

For Abby Hennen, who knocked down 14 kills, led the team in serving with 18 of 18 with three aces and tied as the top digger with 10 along with Ellie Pesch and McKenna Yost, this night brought her full circle.

"I remember watching my sisters play (Samantha, Kelsey and Molly) against Canby and it was always a rivalry. Now it continues with us," said Hennen. The "us" includes her senior sister Morgan, who had 10 kills.

This was a night when a special group called, "With Angel Wings," announced they'd raised \$1,300 to go toward helping families and friends dealing with the life-changing loss of children. Both teams wore the special, blue "With Angel Wings" shirts — and both united for the cause.

Abby Hennen, while admitting the rivalry

with Canby is real, acknowledged the fact they can join together for things like this. "We have a lot of fun with them talking before the game," she said.

But of course, the game is all business. "It's always a competitive match," said Abby Hennen.

Minneota sophomore Natalee Rolbiecki actually took matters into her own hands from the very start.

She slammed down 11 kills herself in the first game and ended with a game-high 16.

"Natalee did a good job tonight," said Abby Hennen. In fact, her performance earned her "player of the game" honors bestowed by Q92 Radio Announcer Paul Raymo after the game.

Despite the heroics at the net by Minneota's



Abby Hennen, diggin' and divin'. Staff Photos by Byron Higgin.



"big boppers," it was the diggers, passers and setter that earned the respect of hitters like Abby Hennen.

"Ellie (Pesch) is quiet, but we know she will always be there," said Hennen. Pesch, the team's Libero, had 10 digs as she helped stabilize the back row. Also drawing Hennen's attention was setter McKenna Yost. "She did some great setting tonight," Hennen added.

Vikings beat Canby/Page 10

In the mud and rain, Vikings sputter, then soar



Connor Sik grabbed MACCRAY's Rhys Schwitters for a sack.
Photo for the Mascot by Brian Jeremiason.

By Brian Jeremiason
Special to the Mascot

Minneota's homecoming football game against MACCRAY was a sloppy mess, and then the rain came.

Minneota would go on to defeat the Wolverines, 36-8 to cap off a festive homecoming week, but not before giving the home fans some cause for concern.

A scoreless first quarter was marred by penalties and turnovers. A goal line stand by Minneota was the lone bright spot for the Vikings as they ended the first quarter locked in a 0-0 tie.

The second quarter saw the Vikings start to light up the scoreboard. Alex Saltzer got things rolling for the Vikings when he took a Wolverine punt 94 yards for a touchdown. Saltzer's sprint down the sideline energized the homecoming crowd, and a Peyton Gillund extra point gave the Vikings a 7-0 lead.

MACCRAY would answer with some points of their own, hitting pay dirt with a 34 yard touchdown pass from Rhys Schwitters to Payton Kleinhuizen. A two-point conversion gave the Wolverines an 8-7 lead.

The lead was short lived, and these would be the last points put

up by MACCRAY.

Minneota, it turns out, was just getting started. Blake Reiss would soon find the end zone on a 13-yard touchdown run. A Gillund extra point advanced the score to 14-8.

Some late half rain dampened the field and the halftime festivities as the Homecoming Court was introduced to cold, wet crowd.

The second half brought more of the same, and the teams dodged rain drops and traded turnovers as the third quarter ended, with the Vikings holding on to that 14-8 lead.

"Defensively, MACCRAY did some nice things against us to take away some of the things we wanted to do," said Assistant Coach Matt Myrvik.

"Their front three really did a good job of using their hands and getting off our initial blocks."

"We just missed hitting on some big plays offensively. Weather may have played a part in our offensive productivity, but we need to do a better job of adapting to what the defense gives us."

"We will continue to work hard to fix certain things and continue to grow as a team as the season winds down," said Myrvik.

The fourth quarter saw the Vikings begin to pull away.
Vikings pull away from MACCRAY/Page 9