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An interview with:

COACH BRANDS

Q. Have you seen anything in your leaders, St. John and Ramos and those guys?

COACH BRANDS: Yeah, St. John and Ramos and Lofthouse, I know you're going to ask about the duck thing, but if a guy makes a mistake, he's still a leader.

Q. Luther Open going to be in place of wrestle-offs this year?

COACH BRANDS: A little bit. We'll have some situations in the wrestling room, but it will be more closed door and not official. There will be more controlled match-ups. We're not going to have brackets like we've had in the past. Luther will tell us a lot, but as is customary for years and years here, ever since I came here as a student-athlete, it's how you perform in competition.

The Midlands is going to tell us a lot as well, and even after Luther, when we get into competition with those dual meets, Edinboro, Iowa State, Iowa City Duals could tell us a little bit. So big competition in how you evaluate and how they perform is the focus maybe more so than making the team. That is the early theme from my perspective. Not something that we really talk about and drilled home. But it's something they've heard more or less more than once.

Q. Could you talk about 125 and Clark and Gilman; how do those two stand right now?

COACH BRANDS: They're even. We like them both. They're a little bit different in their styles. We knew when we recruited them we had two 125-pounders, but we also knew we had two

of the best kids in the country, and it wasn't an issue and it's not an issue now. It's good for us. When the rock and the hard place graduates, then there will be room for whichever one is forced to move up or wants to move up. The rocket and the hard place is Tony Ramos.

Q. Did you envision them separated at one point?

COACH BRANDS: Of course. You don't need two 125 pounders at the same width the whole time. But we did envision the first part of their careers they'd be head-to-head. And Gilman did a great job in the spring and summer and put himself on that team and went overseas and learned a lot there. They both made good progress and they're dead even right now. We'll see how it comes around.

Q. Can you elaborate on the style differences?

COACH BRANDS: Wide open for Clark, and Gilman's probably a little more controlled. Both have good skills, both are serious about wrestling, both are coachable. Attitudes are the same. They work hard at the sport. They're fun to be around. I'm smiling right now because I think of both of them and some of the personality quirks that they have.

On the mat, you're talking about a guy that one guy does super ducks from the outside and quick and can scramble, and the other guy likes an underhook and hanging out - not hanging out in a bad way, but hanging out in good, solid position then hitting his holds when they're there.

Q. What about 141?

COACH BRANDS: 141 and 149 we have about eight guys there that I could list, bing, bing, bing. And you throw (Brody) Grothus, and (Michael) Kelly, and Connor Ryan, and Topher Carton, and (Josh) Dziewa and Nick Trizzino, I

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don't know if that's five or six or seven, but there are a lot of names right there of guys that can be in the lineup. We definitely need a boost there. I've spoken at Cedar Rapids and Polk County I-Clubs, and I'm telling the groups there that it could and may define our season. You have to have points there.

We've had some guys that do a good job there, but I'm not sure that we want the type of guy that's just going to show up for dual meets when they feel like it, then at the end of the year try to get hot. I think it's about training with a purpose every day, being solid, certainly staying healthy is part of it with (Michael) Kelly last year.

But those things it doesn't matter if you're healthy or not because you're really healthy, and you have to be healthy, and you have to be strong. Giving away weight classes, I don't want to go into that again. That's been the theme for the last two years. I don't want to talk about that, it's redundant. Make a name for yourself. Don't ask me how to spell the name. Spell the name because you know how the name is spelled because you've written about him many, many times, that's how I look at it. Become a household name, Josh Jeva, J-e-v-a. Not really.

Q. For the sake of the team, have you ever moved Ramos to 141?

COACH BRANDS: Maybe. You ask the question so that's the first time it's popped into my head. We've done it before.

Q. This is the first time he wrestled at 141?

COACH BRANDS: He weighed in at 133 though. It's one of the things where the rules are silly. One is will you move him up? I don't know. He's our 133 pounder. It's something that we've thought about in the off-season. For your team, not anything to do with Tony Ramos and what's best for him, you probably move him up. But I think he's a 133 pounder.

Q. Speaking of (Bobby) Telford, how's he doing?

COACH BRANDS: Telford is good. He's strong. He's bigger. Knee's fine. It's something that you don't want to go through again for him for his family, for us, and he's looking good.

Q. We've seen some guys like Ramos and Metcalf just all of a sudden evolve into

winners. How does that happen and how does it happen with other guys?

COACH BRANDS: Just learning it in the room; then you work on the sport every day, sometimes it takes a while. But when you're wired the way those guys that you mentioned are wired, they learn to do things. You see it in the room and then maybe you don't see it out there as much. Then you start seeing it. Then once they start doing it, it's like anything else, once you start doing something, now you can do it, so they do it more often.

We need that. We need that because that's how Penn State's team, you could define them. Super-potential for bonus points and proving it, not even potential. You look at the two highlighted guys, Taylor and Ruth, those guys score a whole other bracket each of them, really. They're scoring 8, 10, 12 bonus points in the national tournament. That is a huge boost. So we need more people to be on that theme or on that bandwagon.

That is a good bandwagon to be on, don't you think? Ramos started pinning last year... keep it going.

Q. You've got five guys listed at 285. Does that help push Bobby a little bit?

COACH BRANDS: I can think of three. Yeah, we've got more depth up there. I guess I can think of a couple more now. Yeah, it's good for Telford. Good workout partners. We have a new coach in there, and it's good.

Q. How has new assistant coach Ben Berhow fit in?

COACH BRANDS: He's good. He's a heavyweight, and he's a coach and a workout partner all at the same time, so it's good for us.

Q. You made mention of Midlands. So you'll have a full lineup there and then some guys? Do you know what the slot is?

COACH BRANDS: I'm not sure what they're giving us. I know that I've dinkered in the past and I get whatever they said I get. It's a little bit more than maybe what they want to give us. But I'm good friends with Drew Pariano, and now Jay Borschel is there. So we'll probably have obviously ten point scores and then maybe another five attached. I'm thinking 15. I think that was the agreement.

Then maybe a couple open guys. Who knows. Midlands seems like it's getting stiffer and stiffer every year.

Q. How has Burak's approach to the season changed after last March?

COACH BRANDS: I would say if you're going to define him, he's picked up where he left off. He was strongest at the end of the year. He seemed to get better every time out for the most part, made good progress. You would have liked to see him on the stand in the Nationals. He was top 12, or one match from placing, however you want to say it. He was one match from All-American. He did make progress. We are optimistic that he's on the right path.

Q. Talk about the Penn State dual coming up in December, the process of getting that back on the schedule?

COACH BRANDS: First of all, our administration, we had to go to them, and they had to go to other people across the river. Lisa Bluder was in that because she gave up a primetime time and graduation got moved. There are a lot of good things going on to get that to happen. That means that wrestling is important. It means it's important to our administration for them to fight and do things. It's a battle because it's another thing on your plate when the plate is already full.

So great job by Gary Barta and our administration and our facilities people, and to communication across the river. Graduation is a big deal, it's a big deal to our program. So to get that to happen was a good thing.

Q. Looks like Minnesota and Oklahoma State are coming here as well?

COACH BRANDS: Kind of added to the pizzazz of the schedule. You have a good home schedule anyway, and now you've got Penn State in addition to that.

Q. Any surprises coming out of your two-a-day camps from fall?

COACH BRANDS: Last year I was pretty optimistic if I remember, and that was a little bit of a departure for me. And I'm not going to give them a lot of credit right now. I want to see emergence. I want to see urgency. I want to see fight. I want to see points. I want to see separation and domination and those types of things. It's not just about putting the singlet on and running out there. It's about putting the singlet on, getting ready, and

then running out there and putting points on the board. Wrestling the way that gives you the best chance to win, and that is to not just win what you're maybe able to win by, but blowing the doors off.

I mean, you guys are the experts in the media. You guys make predictions. Supersede all your expectations. You've got a tight match-up at X-weight class, and you guys all think it's going to be a toss-up or you're going to give the nod here and it's going to be close. Just blow the doors off and just have everybody when they walk out of here, they're talking about your match.

Q. Have you seen how your team will match-up with the likes of a Penn State, Oklahoma State, Minnesota when it comes to the end? What needs to be done?

COACH BRANDS: It's always bonus points. It's winning tough match-ups, always winning tough match-ups. And being disciplined with weight control and feeling good and those sorts of things. But it always comes down to that.

Of course as coaches, we know that Ramos is going to see Gulibon. Gulibon seems to be the guy. We think Retherford will be in there. We know what their line-up's going to be.

Nick Moore's going to have to be really ready to go. Of course we're aware of the match-ups, but it's more getting these guys thinking when you go out to perform, it's doing the things they talked about. Every day bringing that discipline and lifestyle.

Q. What are your thoughts on the rule changes that got implemented this year?

COACH BRANDS: I like the rule changes. Did anybody watch the All-Star meet? I don't know if anything changed. I like the hands. I liked both legs. I liked that the referee is looking for a stale mate so long while they're down on the mat and then they blow both up after 30, 25, 30, 40 seconds.

So I think you're going to get a quick two -- the defensive guy is going to bounce up quick. So I think it's going to increase action. The hands on the mat thing, I think it's going to eliminate maybe some ambiguity with the officials. Was it past reaction time or not? It's clear cut. Hands touch, it's two. Was he behind the elbow though? Was he behind the arm enough? I don't know. But I like that any time there is more scoring. I don't

know about the shoulders off the mat thing. I just don't know about that one, maybe.

But then they talked about absolutely enforcing a five-foot apron protection area. If they don't have it, they're not going to have the meet go on. The referee's going to measure it. Of course our game management here, our match management here is dead-on all the time. It's always a high-class event here. It's going to force other places to do that with the apron, that's good. It's protective, and that's how you're going to keep the wrestling going.

Then at the All-Star meet, I don't think there was a five-foot apron and they had the All-Star meet. So are you going to enforce what you say you're going to enforce? That's going to be the key.

So we'll know at the end of November. We'll know how they call it. Then it will probably get clearer defined and so on and so forth. I like the rule changes though.

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