

**PURDUE WRESTLING: 'SOUR TASTE' BUILDS NEW MAN OUT OF SENIOR****Kaley Higgins / Purdue Exponent / Oct. 15, 2015**

For the second time in his career, then-junior wrestler Danny Sabatello competed in the 2015 NCAA Championship wrestling tournament.

The feat was quite an accomplishment, especially since he joined Purdue graduate Nick Lawrence in being one of only two Boilermakers to advance to the third round. They were also the final two to bow out. Though the Boilers came hungry, they scored 4.5 points, finishing 42nd out of 69 teams.

"I thought sending eight guys out of 10, which tied for the record at Purdue, was a great step," said head coach Tony Ersland. "I thought we had guys who could get on the podium too, and we didn't. So that kind of left a bit of a sour taste in our mouth."

Saturday marked the first official practice of the 2015-16 season. Now Sabatello is a senior, and that "sour taste" has fueled him in the offseason to not only work harder but also become a team leader.

"Obviously we didn't get what we wanted last year, so with that being said, I think that has a fire under me to come out and just feel great and just wrestle with no fear," said Sabatello. "And that's what I've been doing all summer, all preseason ... just coming out and attacking."

Now that all five of the senior starters have left, some have pegged Sabatello as being the leader of the team due to his accomplishments. Out of the five seniors on the 2015-16 roster, Sabatello leads the group with an overall record of 61-32.

Though he may be one of the most successful wrestlers on the mat for the Boilermakers, his teammates and coaches fondly refer to him as "Sabby," the quirky nickname fitting his very different personality. Sabby holds such titles as "social media diva" and "practical joker extraordinaire," and is largely accountable for the light mood that is felt by the team during practices.

But this year, Sabatello claims that things are different. He has recognized the expectation of being a leader and has already made strides to live up to it. When asked if he feels the pressure, he replied with a confident, "No."

"If anything, it fires me up more just because I know it's an incredible honor to be a leader of this team because we have so many hardworking, talented guys," said Sabatello. "I know that if I'm the leader of the pack, then I have to lead by example and always be doing the right stuff for these guys."

Sabatello claims he is doing just that. Since the end of his junior year, he has recognized where he needs to improve, noting the adjustment he has made to his maturity level.

"I've completely matured my whole entire lifestyle," he said. "Obviously, you're young and in college, there's going to be distractions, not all of them bad, but I mean, you just have to come together as a man your senior year and just focus on what's necessary and just getting it done and having your priorities right in front of you and attacking them."

Ersland has recognized the growth in Sabatello.

"I think Danny is progressing in that way," Ersland said. "It's a bit of a mixed bag with Danny because he's kind of a social diva and he keeps it light – he likes to have fun. But I have seen him embrace that leadership role more and that's what I've asked of Danny, as well as the other seniors ... to embrace that leadership role, show these guys what it takes to have success, because the young freshmen are going to look around and they're going to take cues from some of the older guys."

Sabatello's strides in leadership and motivation have resonated with freshman wrestler Nathaniel Alexander.

"Danny is always the guy who will finish – if not first – in the top three, and if we're running a race, he'll head back another quarter mile just to catch up and find the guys who are in the back and encourage them and run that extra half mile," Alexander said. "He'll run an extra three quarters of a mile just to find someone and encourage them, so I see him as being a great leader."

**WRESTLING TWINS PREPARE TO START SENIOR SEASON****Brock Reish / Purdue Exponent / Oct. 27, 2015**

With the start of wrestling season nearing, the teams' seniors are realizing their final chance to reach the goals they set years ago. For two grapplers in particular, their senior years will mark the end of a chapter in two interesting wrestling careers.

Doug and Chad Welch, twin brothers, came to Purdue together five years ago and are looking to make the most of their final season as Boilermakers.

The duo has done everything together since the time they were born, with a special emphasis on wrestling.

When it became apparent that both were going to be able to compete at the highest level of college wrestling, there was little doubt the twins would spend their NCAA careers together.

"When we started having success in high school, we started thinking about college. Our grades weren't there, but we really had to buckle down to get our grades right," Chad said. "After that, come our (junior or) senior year, we were like, 'We're a package deal. We're going to a (Division-I) college and we're going together.'"

Once the opportunity to wrestle at Purdue presented itself, the pair couldn't have been happier.

"It was awesome. It was extremely exiting for us (and) our family," Doug said. "We were just pumped for the opportunity."

As one may expect, when twin brothers find themselves on the same team, there is at least a hint of competitive rivalry. While Doug and Chad are often competing on the mat, the competitive nature of their relationship extends into most aspects of their lives.

"We definitely push each other a lot. Yes, we do have rivalries. We try to outdo one another all the time, academically, athletically – always trying to one-up the other," Doug said. "There's a lot of competition in almost everything we do, including who can eat dinner the fastest, who can wake up the earliest. If you can make a competition out of it, we're going to. It makes everything fun."

Chad echoed his brother's thoughts.

"(If) it's an exam, we're going to see which one's going to do better, and it's bragging rights, so it's going to motivate the other twin to do better. But it's not a rivalry, because I want him to do the best, and he wants me to do the best I can."

When it comes to wrestling, both of the twins have posted impressive records thus far in their career as Boilermakers.

Doug holds a 45-29 career record and Chad stands at 51-46. Both have qualified for the NCAA Championships at least once; Doug has achieved that accolade twice. Both have also been place-winners at the Big Ten Tournament.

With practices for their final season already under way, nearing the end of their time at Purdue is becoming a reality.

"We set our expectations high. We wanted to ... be national champions. We wanted to come in here and do the best we can and reach our potential as wrestlers," Chad said. "And we know – our goals – we can attain them."

Not many athletes get the chance to spend their entire careers with a sibling, and it's not a situation Doug and Chad take for granted.

"It's definitely a unique situation, and honestly, I wouldn't have it any other way," Doug said. "It helps knowing my twin is here; he's doing the same thing. It's definitely a boost (to) morale. We're both extremely excited, this last year, to go out there, wrestle hard, have fun and reach our goals."

**FIRST CLASS: FRESHMAN GROUP SETS FOUNDATION FOR YEARS TO COME****Kyle Charters / Black and Gold Illustrated / Nov. 2015 (1/2)**

In high school, James Ford decided he'd work out four times a day. He woke up early to get in conditioning, then worked out individually with a coach; after school, he had a camp to attend, one that was divided into two sessions. He did them both, which was a grind, but "it was fun," he said.

Perhaps.

Regardless of what others think, however, it was an enjoyable challenge for Ford. And that kind of attitude is a reason why he and his eight classmates are Boilermakers, comprising second-year coach Tony Ersland's first freshman class.

"I'll take mindset and work ethic every day," Ersland said. "It's a given that you have to have a minimum of talent-you can't compete on the same field otherwise- but once you get past that skill set or level of talent that you need, the biggest separation of these kids is mindset, how they want to train, how they want to compete and the willingness to follow through on it."

That encapsulates what Ersland is looking for at Purdue.

As it happens, his first recruiting class is a big one, with nine members who at the very least will add depth in their first season but might also be able to crack the lineup. It includes Ford, who was ranked 16th in his class nationally at 220 pounds to end his high school career, and Nate Limmex who most publications placed at their top 10 at 138.

All told, the nine account for nine All-America honors and four high school state tournament titles. They hail from six states, including three from Indiana and two from New Jersey.

"It's a big group for me," Ersland said. "Obviously, it's special because it is my first recruiting class, but you're also trying to set the foundation and tone for what we want the future to be from a mentality standpoint of how they're going to compete, how they're going to train day-to-day, setting the bar high and operating at a high level every day. Even the guys, when you look at a ranking or talent standpoint, we're still looking for a mind-set, the work ethic, they'll add to the room in different ways and I think we got a lot of that done in this first class."

It's building toward big goals for the Boilermakers. Year 1 was a good step in the Ersland Era, with Purdue sending eight to the NCAA Championships for only the third time in program history, and the most in the last dozen years. The Boilermakers also spent seven weeks ranked in the top 25, checking in at No. 23 in the final USA Today/NWCA coaches poll. Purdue was 10-8 in dual meets overall, 3-6 in the Big Ten, an improved mark over the 6-8 and 1-7 of the previous year.

But the Boilermakers scored only 4.5 points at the national meet (for 42nd place) and were 10th at the Big Ten Championships, showing Ersland that though the program was improved it still had a ways to go.

Five of the eight NCAA qualifiers graduated- the three returnees are seniors Danny Sabattelo, Chad Welch and Doug Welch- and though the nine rookies won't be asked to replace the lost production, they'll be asked to push others who could.

"I'm, trying to make it so there's nowhere to hide in the room," Ersland said. "They need to be making people better, so even if you're not starting as a freshman, you need to challenge these guys and force them to be better, operate at a high level every day. I want kids to feel like when they come to compete (at meets) on Friday and Sunday, it's not that big a deal: "I've had my toughest tests in (practice) and I'm prepared and therefore, confident."

It's that kind of atmosphere that attracted highly touted athletes like Ford and Limmex. They want to work.

"None of the best guys in the country are normal, they're not everyday people," Ford said. "They all are a little bit crazy, if you want to use that word. Most people don't want to work out twice a day six or seven times a week, or do extra stuff on your own. Most don't want to do that, that's not what they think about when considering their everyday routine, but if you want to be the best, it's what you have to do: I've got to be here. I've got to be doing this."

Limmex agrees. The Ada, Mich., native sensed that sort of character is what Ersland was looking for during the recruiting process. And because of it, Limmex felt a connection with Purdue's staff-Ersland and assistants Zach Tanelli and Tyrel Todd- because they were relatable and fun, capable of a joke.

"But also guys I wanted to work hard for," Limmex said. "...When coaches first started recruiting me, they were fresh and had just taken the job, so I could tell that they had a lot of energy and were very excited and very motivated to turn the team around and get us going, make some improvement. I knew they were going to work hard and do whatever they could to help us succeed."

Early returns on the Freshman 9 have been good. In the preseason, they've built camaraderie hanging out off the mat but building toward the same goal on it.

"Some of us were ranked, some weren't," Ford said, "but we all have the mentality that we're tough as nails, have to keep going. We all love working hard, we can't go a day without working out pretty much. It's kind of hard when you're at home sitting on couch wondering, "Man, what could I be doing right now?" I think that (Ersland) definitely showed that's what he wanted from me and all of us when he was recruiting us.

**FIRST CLASS: FRESHMAN GROUP SETS FOUNDATION FOR YEARS TO COME****Kyle Charters / Black and Gold Illustrated / Nov. 2015 (2/2)**

In time, Ersland is going to be asking a lot more of this first class, pushing them to not only be great practice competition for upperclassman but to excel against other competition in the Big Ten. It's the kind of environment he saw as a wrestler at powerful Iowa and as an assistant at Nebraska.

"In four years, I want to look back and see a lot of firsts: Big Ten champions, multiple champions, multiple national champions, top-five team rankings, perennially being in there among the best teams in the country, " Ersland said. "That's where we're trying to go in the next four years and we think we've got a great head start."

"It's what I call the transformation of Purdue wrestling, the ability to do a lot of these things for the first time. And we're looking for kids who want to be a part of that. Coming from Iowa, I've been part of a winning tradition and that was fun, but maybe some of the more enjoyable aspects I've had in coaching have been building something from scratch and watching it totally transform, and I think that's what the opportunity we have at Purdue and I'm extremely excited about the transformation that's going to take place the next couple years."

**THIRD BOILERMAKER BROTHER LOOKS TO MAKE A MARK OF HIS OWN****Brock Reish / Purdue Exponent / Nov. 17, 2015**

Not every wrestling team in the nation has twin brothers competing side-by-side, but it's even more uncommon to see three brothers on the same NCAA Division I team.

Sophomore Luke Welch followed in the footsteps of his older brothers, now-senior twins Doug and Chad, but says there are plenty of differences between him and the twins.

According to Luke, when his brothers decided to attend Purdue, he hadn't given much thought to where he would spend his college years, saying he had other things on which to focus.

"I was still set on winning a state title. I fell short of that, but Doug and Chad would reach out to me – small text messages here and there, so we still stayed close even though they were far away."

Once his high school career was winding down, Luke was faced with the decision of where to carry out his collegiate years. He looked at other schools, but eventually fell in line with what his brothers had done and became a Boilermaker.

"There's mixed feeling there. Whenever Doug and Chad started looking at Purdue, there were some wrestlers that I looked up to from Indiana ... who went to Purdue like Camden Eppert, Cashé Quiroga – guys that I really liked watching wrestle – and I was like 'Man, I want to be there with those guys,' but then Doug and Chad went there, and I was like 'I don't know if I want to be around Doug and Chad though,'" Luke said with a laugh.

Doug and Chad are admittedly competitive in many aspects of life, and Luke says he is just as competitive with them as they are with each other. Growing up, everything from neighborhood games of wiffle ball to final grades on report cards were fueled by brotherly competition.

Academically, Luke is studying in the same field as Doug: social studies education. Having had many of the same teachers and courses, scholarly competition is even more obvious.

Of course, the athletic competition is undeniable.

"This summer I did better than them at a tournament. That felt really good to me, because all my life it's been 'I've got to do better than Doug and Chad each year. What they do their freshman year – I've got to do better than that. What are they doing this year? I've got to up them this year.' I don't care about what they've done in their past, at my age. I want to do what they're doing, better, right now."

While a love for the sport of wrestling and an overall competitive nature – compounded with the simple fact that they are brothers – help draw many similarities between the sophomore and the elder duo, Luke prides himself on the differences.

According to Luke, the most noticeable differences are perhaps the social ones. While the twins spend much of their free time together, Luke is found more often spending time to himself.

"I'm definitely my own person, my own branch," Luke said. "But we're still close. We've got a (few) personality (similarities). I've got a little bit of Chad here and a little bit of Doug here."

In his day-to-day routine, Luke admits he often catches himself doing what he describes as a "Doug move" or a "Chad move."

With the 2015-16 season already underway, Luke has set high goals for himself but could be facing some new challenges as a redshirt sophomore. Last year, he was in the starting lineup for about half the season, wrestling the 125-pound class. Heading into the current season, Luke and the Purdue coaching staff decided he would be a better fit at 133.

Head coach Tony Ersland is not at all worried about Luke adjusting to the new class and says the experience he got starting part of the season as a redshirt freshman will aid him moving forward.

"He's a good competitor. He competes well in front of the crowd. I think he enjoys being out there in front of the crowd; you get the best out of him in those moments," said Ersland. "He's a young man who – the consistency (at practice) is huge for him. If he can up what he's doing on a daily basis and take it out in front of the crowd like he does, he's going to be very tough."

The Purdue wrestling team next competes when they travel to Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania, to take on the Bloomsburg University Huskies in a dual meet.

**FAMILY TIES BIND DUNDEE-CROWN'S CHRISTIAN BRUNNER TO PURDUE****Gary Larsen / Elgin Courier-News / Nov. 24, 2015**

It was the last college visit for Dundee-Crown's Christian Brunner and it was the one that stuck.

The Chargers' 195-pound senior and his father had visited Nebraska, Northern Iowa, Old Dominion and Maryland before turning their car in the direction of West Lafayette, Ind.

And once the two-time state medalist saw the campus and met the coaching staff at Purdue, he knew it was the place for him.

"It was the program, the mentality, and the culture there that I knew I wanted to be a part of," Brunner said.

Brunner committed to wrestle for Purdue roughly six weeks ago, and Dundee-Crown coach Tim Hayes believes his senior could pack up his things and head there right now.

"He's definitely college-ready. He's ready to compete at that Big Ten level," Hayes said. "He's just a bully of a kind of guy, he knows what he needs to do to win, and he sticks to that game plan."

Purdue is in his family's blood. Brunner's uncle Frank Kmet helped Hersey win a state title in 1987 before becoming a defensive lineman at Purdue, and another uncle, Jeff Zgonina, played at Carmel before joining Kmet on the Boilermakers' defensive line.

Zgonina then played 17 seasons in the NFL, winning a Super Bowl with the St. Louis Rams in 2000. Neither uncle put any pressure on Brunner to attend Purdue.

"They were going to be supportive wherever I went," Brunner said. "The family (legacy) had something to do with it, the coaches had a lot to do with it, and the education — Purdue has a lot to offer me. I want to major in biology, either veterinary medicine or wildlife management."

Brunner enters his senior year with a 114-21 record and is ranked among the nation's top 20 wrestlers at 195 by Intermat, Flowrestling and WIN Magazine.

In each of the last two state tournaments, it took a pair of state champions to keep Brunner from the state title he covets. He lost in the 182-pound final as a sophomore to Deerfield's Colton Emmerich and last year he lost his semifinal match at 195 to East Aurora's Tim Young.

"Winning the state title is the goal," Brunner said. "I don't dwell on the last two years, but not winning it last year definitely lit a fire under me. I want to get it done this year."

Brunner wrestled at Overtime School of Wrestling in Naperville over the summer. He's always been an outstanding mat wrestler and he worked to enhance his style during the offseason.

Hayes, the Chargers' first-year coach, wrestled on the 2004 Dundee-Crown team that went undefeated in dual meets before losing to Providence in a state semifinal. He inherits a young team at his alma mater and Hayes is happy to have someone like Brunner in his practice room.

"It's helpful for them to see how hard he works after everything he has achieved at the state level," Hayes said.

"He's very vocal but he's also the one leading stretches. He's always working hard in the room and leads by example. He works hard and doesn't take any break, Everything is a hundred percent."

## WELCH TRIO AIM FOR NCAA TOURNAMENT TRIFECTA

Gordon Engelhardt / Evansville Courier & Press / Nov. 30, 2015

All that rolling around on the carpet when they were kids and tearing up their parents' living room furniture was worth it.

Identical twins Doug and Chad Welch qualified for the NCAA wrestling tournament last season and hope to make it back-to-back bids as redshirt seniors at Purdue University. If they do qualify, the venue couldn't be much more prestigious: Madison Square Garden in New York on March 17-19.

"It would definitely be something to keep us motivated, for all three of us to make it to the NCAA's at Madison Square," said Chad, a 165-pounder. Doug competes in the 157-pound division while youngest brother Luke is a 133-pound redshirt sophomore.

Motivation is not in short supply in the Welch family.

"Our goal was to get to the podium (top eight) and make all-American, but we didn't get the job done," said Doug.

Nevertheless, he labeled it an "awesome experience" to have his twin also wrestling at the NAAs last year at the Scottrade Center in St. Louis.

"We run off each other," Doug said. "If I see him do well, it's going to make me want to do well."

All three brothers embrace their sibling rivalry.

"I take whatever he does and use it," said Doug, who considers himself more introverted than his twin. "If he wins, I gotta win. He can't do better than me. He's my brother."

As for the living room furniture, their father, Curt, paid for the damage, trying to keep their mother, Dawn, happy.

"My parents didn't want us breaking stuff, but inevitably (it happened)," Chad said.

"Growing up as siblings, Doug, Chad and I all fought a lot," Luke said.

All seven members of the Welch wrestling family were inducted into the Indiana High School Wrestling Coaches Association Hall of Fame in February 2013 at Greenwood.

"It was like a family reunion," Chad said.

Doug and Chad won state championships as seniors at Castle High School in the 152- and 160-pound divisions in 2011. Luke placed second at state at 126 his senior year.

Chad, a two-time NCAA tournament qualifier, dropped from 174 to 165 to give himself a better chance to perhaps gain all-America status. He said Curt, himself a wrestling standout at the University of Indianapolis and Castle's longtime baseball coach, taught his sons to love wrestling.

"We craved it," Chad said. "We wanted it more and more."

He said Castle wrestling coach Bob Harmon was well-versed at teaching technique.

"He taught us to go out and be dominant," Chad said.

As a senior for the Boilers, Doug doesn't want to think about it being his last year.

"I really don't want to put extra pressure on myself," Doug said.

Luke wavered about whether he would come to Purdue. He didn't want to be someone who automatically followed in his brother's footsteps. Inevitably, he did just that. While watching his brothers compete at state, he saw other Purdue-bound wrestlers there and wanted to be their future teammate.

"Ultimately it came down to Purdue was the best place for me," Luke said.

He said he didn't feel as homesick, knowing his brothers were around. On the other hand, Luke contemplated transferring when he was sitting out his redshirt season.

"I felt sick of wrestling," Luke said. "I got beat up a lot and I got hurt a lot."

He thought about transferring to UIndy, but wanted to stay and wrestle in the Big Ten.

Luke and Doug plan to become social studies teachers while Chad's major is law and society — but he doesn't want to become a lawyer. But first, there's a little more sibling rivalry to take care of.

"This is my last year competing against them," Luke said. "I definitely want to one-up them one last time."



## BURGER KING OUTSTANDING STUDENT ATHLETE: PENN'S KOBE WOODS

Carl Deffenbaugh / WSBT22 / Dec. 3, 2015

SOUTH BEND - One season ends, and another begins. For Kobe Woods, that transition took all of two days.

"Last year I got a couple days off," says the Penn senior. "And after a day I was like, 'What am I doing? I kind of have a little too much time.' "

On Saturday, Woods and his fellow Kingsmen were on the Lucas Oil Stadium turf -- falling 28-16 to Center Grove in the Class 6A State Championship.

"It breaks my heart," Woods said after the loss. "But I'm so proud of this team."

By Monday he was all in on the wrestling mat taking some good-natured ribbing from his coaches on his conditioning coming out of football season.

"Football is a little bigger, bulkier," Woods says of the difference between the two sports. "Wrestling is probably a little slimmer, a little more cut."

"They're all banged up and sore from that Saturday night game, and they're here," says Penn coach Brad Harper of the around 30 combo athletes in his wrestling room. "It just shows that they are true champions."

Woods is indeed a champion. Last season, he and Chase Osborn became the first Kingsmen in 44 years to win individual state titles. The duo led Penn to the program's first-ever team championship.

"I really love the target on my back," Woods says. "I think it gives me that fuel to push every day that much harder."

Woods will wrestle at Purdue next year. But first he's back to defend his crown. And he hopes to pin down another piece of history.

"He has a chance to be the first [wrestler] in school history to win two state titles," says Harper. "It's going to be pretty exciting to watch Kobe in action this season."

"I'm just ready to come out here and just grind it out one more year for wrestling," adds Woods. "And look to win that state championship again."



**MIDLANDS CHAMPIONSHIPS****Mike Finn / WIN Magazine / Jan. 11, 2016****Midlands Notes**

Chad Welch is one of three brothers in the Purdue wrestling room and the 165-pounder can take bragging rights among his siblings by becoming the first Boilermaker in over 50 years to capture a Midlands title when he pinned Iowa State's Tanner Weatherman in the final.

In addition to Chad, a senior from Newburgh, Ind., is brother Doug, a senior starter at 157 and younger brother Luke, a sophomore at 133 pounds.

"It's a sibling rivalry and we love to have bragging rights in the house," said Welch, who became Purdue's first Midlands winner since former Boilermaker Dave Gibson won in 1963. "But we want to do what's best for each other."

The Boilermakers have also adjusted to the leadership of coach Tony Ersland, who has held the head coaching title for two years.

"Coaches have really helped me open up offensively," Welch said. "I'm really buying into the system and making it more entertaining. No one likes a 2-1 match so go out there and put the match in your favor."

**Top-5 Team Results****Pl. Team (Champs/Placers) Pts.**

1. Iowa (3/9) 152
2. Nebraska (0/10) 135
3. Rutgers (0/7) 110
4. NC State (2/4) 95.5
5. Rider (0/4) 67

**Championship Matches**

- 125: Thomas Gilman (Iowa) dec. Ronnie Bresser (Oregon State), 5-1  
 133: Emilio Saavedra (Old Dominion) dec. Josh Alber (No. Iowa), 4-2 (SV)  
 141: Andrew Long (Grand View) tech. fall Steve Bleise (No. Illinois), 23-6  
 149: Brandon Sorensen (Iowa) dec. Jason Tsirtsis (Northwestern), 3-1 (SV)  
 157: Thomas Gantt (NC State) dec. Cody Pack (South Dakota State), 4-2  
 165: Chad Welch (Purdue) pinned Tanner Weatherman (Iowa State), 3:54  
 174: Cody Walters (Ohio) dec. Jonathan Schleifer (Princeton), 1-0  
 184: David Taylor (Nittany Lion WC) dec. Timothy Dudley (Nebraska), 5-3  
 197: Nathan Burak (Iowa) dec. Derek White (Nebraska), 6-1  
 Hwt: Nick Gwiazdowski (NC State) dec. Tanner Hall (Arizona State), 4-3

**GRAPPLERS PREPARING FOR TWO CONFERENCE DUAL MEETS THIS WEEKEND****Greg Mochen / Purdue Exponent / Jan. 15, 2016**

The Purdue wrestling team is looking to improve its 0-1 Big Ten record with two dual meets this weekend. The Boilers will wrestle Michigan State on Friday at 7 p.m. in East Lansing and Maryland on Sunday at 1 p.m. in Holloway Gymnasium.

Purdue head coach Tony Ersland's squad was 5-1 heading into the conference season but suffered a lopsided 42-3 loss to No. 1 Penn State in the Big Ten opener last Friday. Assistant coach Zach Tanelli said there was a lack of effort in the Penn State dual that needs change this weekend.

"We need to compete better as a team; we lacked fire and passion and competitiveness," Tanelli said. "That's something whether you're winning or losing that you can really control and dictate the level of effort you give. Where you fall on the spectrum of winning and losing, that might vary, but you should always give full effort, and we had guys that did not give full effort, and they've heard me say that. That's what it comes down to. You have to compete at a very high level in this conference, and if you don't feel like competing one day, those are the results you're going to get."

While it was most likely a long-shot for the Boilermakers to beat the top-ranked Nittany Lions, what was most surprising about the dual was that senior Chad Welch (19-3) was pinned at 165 lbs in in the first period. Welch had won the 32-team Midlands tournament in his previous bout, becoming the first Purdue wrestler to take home the title since 1963. He was ranked No. 5 in the nation at 165 lbs entering the match.

Welch emphasized the importance of looking ahead at future matches and not focusing on the past. He also said that against Michigan State and Maryland, he plans to wrestle aggressively with the hopes of scoring bonus points for the team.

"(I plan to) enforce my will," Welch said, "really push the match, the pace, open up and score some points."

Neither the Spartans nor the Terrapins have had much success this year. The Spartans are currently 0-8 (0-3 Big Ten) on the season, and Maryland is 4-6 (1-3 Big Ten), placing 21st at the Midlands tournament in late December. Purdue took 11th at the event. Despite this, Tanelli said there are individual match-ups that won't be as easy.

"We're looking forward to a lot of individual match-ups, even in dual meets like Michigan State or Maryland where on paper we're favored," Tanelli said. "There are a couple of matches where we're not favored, and those are matches where we need to take advantage of our opportunities."

**AREA DUO LEADS NO. 20 PURDUE WRESTLING PAST MSU  
Purdue and Staff Reports / Lafayette Journal & Courier / Jan. 16, 2016**

Big victories by McCutcheon graduate Alex Griffin and Delphi's Tanner Lynde helped the 20th-ranked Purdue wrestling team defeat Michigan State 27-15 Friday night in East Lansing.

Griffin's 17-0 technical fall against Kaelan Richards at 149 pounds started a run of five straight wins for the Boilermakers (6-2). It took Griffin just five minutes to rack up the technical fall, scoring 10 points in the first period on his way to his third shutout of the season and his ninth victory.

Lynde capped the run and clinched the match for Purdue by pinning Shawn Shadaia in 2:29 at 184 pounds. Lynde's fall was the fifth of his career.

"That was a great win for Tanner," Purdue coach Tony Ersland said. "I like that he was strong and had purpose on top tonight. That's something we talked about this week, we want them to be aggressive on top. Tanner was determined to break [Shadaia] down from the top and he succeeded."

In between Griffin and Lynde, Purdue also got victories from Doug Welch at 157, sixth-ranked Chad Welch at 165 and Jacob Morrissey at 174.

Luke Welch put Purdue's first points on the board thanks to a 10-4 decision over Garth Yenter at 133. Tyler Kral closed out the Boilermakers' efforts by winning his second straight match, a 6-0 decision over Dimitrius Renfroe for the eighth win of the season.

Purdue returns home to Holloway Gymnasium on Sunday to take on Maryland (4-7, 1-4 Big Ten) at 1 p.m.

**PURDUE WRESTLING DOMINATES TERRAPINS AT HOME, 32-6****Greg Mochen / Purdue Exponent / Jan. 17, 2016**

The Purdue wrestling team won eight of 10 matches, beating Maryland, 32-6, on Sunday afternoon in Holloway Gymnasium. Of the eight victories, Purdue scored bonus points in five, with three major decisions, one technical fall and one fall.

"I thought we competed pretty well across the board throughout the seven minutes," head coach Tony Ersland said.

After picking up a major decision from redshirt freshman Ben Thornton (14-8) at 125 lbs and giving up a minor decision at 133 lbs, the Boilermakers won several tough matches in the middle weights.

At 141 lbs Purdue senior Danny Sabatello (12-9) beat Maryland junior Billy Rappo (15-8), 9-3, in a match that was closer than the score reveals. Down 1-0 with 11 seconds left in the second period, Sabatello scored on a takedown and quickly scored four more on a tilt before Rappo reversed him at the buzzer. Sabatello protected his lead in the third with an escape and takedown.

At 149 lbs junior Alex Griffin (10-4) picked up a major decision, 9-1, over Freshman Wade Hodges (4-7) of Maryland. Up 5-1 with less than 10 seconds left, Griffin tilted Hodges for four near fall points at the buzzer, just enough for the extra team point.

"I'd like to see Griffin get started a little sooner," Ersland said. "The more chances he puts himself on top the more points he's going to score, so I'd like to see him on top in the first period. ... But he did get it going and closed it out very strong."

An upset at 157 lbs extended the Boilers lead. Purdue senior Doug Welch (10-6) beat No. 19 senior Lou Mascola (13-4) of Maryland, 10-4. After Mascola almost pinned Welch early, Welch took control of the match with a reversal and four near fall points as time expired in the first period. Solid defense down the stretch protected Welch's lead.

"He was in a crab position and we work that position a lot," Welch said. "It's all about getting your hips out and so I just turned my hips, got them out and put him on his back."

Ersland described Welch's key reversal as "really took advantage of a misstep by a good opponent and it held up for the match."

The Boilermakers won the next four bouts including a major decision at 165 lbs by No. 6 senior Chad Welch (21-3), a technical fall by sophomore Jacob Morrissey (11-8) at 174 lbs and the lone fall of the dual by senior Drake Stein (10-13) at 197 lbs.

Purdue's next match is against the Hawkeyes at 9 p.m. on Friday in Iowa.

**HAWKEYE REUNION PART OF WRESTLING SHOWCASE IN IOWA CITY****Andy Hamilton / Des Moines Register / Jan. 21, 2016**

Tony Ersland was in his first year at Iowa, fresh off a pair of state championships at Humboldt and ready to continue his career in a sport that eventually would become his meal ticket.

At an influential age for a wrestler, Ersland found himself surrounded in 1993 by some of the best competitive influences, particularly two sets of twins embarking on their first year of international competition: Tom and Terry Brands and Troy and Terry Steiner.

"It's just the work ethic and the focus those guys maintained day to day," said Ersland, the second-year Purdue coach. "There was never a loss of focus or even intensity. Every day they operated at a high level. That consistency, in my mind, is key and we talk a lot about that with our kids.

"It's not just putting in the work five days out of eight or nine. Your record reflects the number of days you've been stringing in a row. If you've been in there 10 days in a row operating at a high level, your record is going to reflect that. That consistency and maintaining that intensity was something I really took from those guys. There was always a focus, but it was followed by work ethic, too."

Friday night is a reunion of sorts for Ersland. It's the first time he's been back to Iowa City since becoming the head coach of the Boilermakers, who take on the Brands-led Hawkeyes. He's coming with a program that has shown marked improvement during the past year.

The Boilermakers matched a school record last year with eight NCAA qualifiers. In December, 165-pounder Chad Welch became Purdue's first Midlands champion since 1963. Ersland has also signed five of InterMat's top 100 recruits in the 2016 class.

"I think you're starting to see some results that indicate there's a belief these kids can compete at a high level and do well, but we need to take the next step," Ersland said. "Qualifying for nationals is not the goal. We need to take the next step with All-Americans, Big Ten champs and national champs. That's really what we're trying to do this year."

There's an opening act before the Hawkeyes and Boilermakers step onto the mat for Friday night's 8 p.m. dual.

Terry Steiner, the women's freestyle national coach for USA Wrestling, brought a select group of Olympic hopefuls to Iowa City for a five-day training camp in preparation for April's Olympic Trials in Carver-Hawkeye Arena. Prior to the Iowa-Purdue meet, four spots will be determined for the women's freestyle team that will compete at the Pan American Games Olympic Qualifying Tournament.

The wrestle-off lineup includes reigning World champion Helen Maroulis and 2015 World bronze medalist Leigh Jaynes-Provisor.

Steiner said part of the reason for the Iowa City trip is to acquaint the public with some of top America stars in the sport. But there are benefits for his wrestlers as well.

"It's a great training venue," he said. "There's a standard in here. There's a standard of excellence, a standard of intensity and purpose and I want them to see that and be around it and feel it. I think being around the Iowa wrestlers and Tom and Terry, I want them to witness that and be around it."

The second-ranked Hawkeyes have won 17 consecutive Big Ten duals and 41 of their 50 individual matches in conference meets. Eight Iowa wrestlers appeared Thursday in the first NCAA coaches' panel rankings. But head coach Tom Brands is more fixated on ironing out two weights where the Hawkeyes are still unsettled: 141 and 165.

"The biggest message I give to our guys individually is this is not about being in the lineup," said Brands, whose team also wrestles Sunday at No. 11 Nebraska. "This is about performing at your highest level in the competition arena when the referee is there and there's an opponent from a different institution. That's what this is about.

"Sometimes we get guys who take ownership of that class and that's their goal because this is such a storied tradition. But you can't forget why it's a storied tradition. It didn't become a storied tradition because guys were excited to be in the lineup and that's where it ended. It's a storied tradition because guys whipped some serious tail and owned some pretty exciting moments in the history of the sport at the collegiate level."

**ERSLAND RETURNS TO SCENE OF MANY SUCCESSES****Matt Levins / Burlington Hawk Eye Newspaper / The Predicament / Jan. 22, 2016**

IOWA CITY — Tony Ersland has been an Iowa wrestling fan for as long as he can remember, even though he grew up just 83 miles northwest of Ames.

So when it came time to pick a college, well, there wasn't much of a choice for Ersland. As a member of the Hawkeyes, Ersland helped Iowa win three straight NCAA team championships and four consecutive Big Ten Conference titles. He finished one match shy of earning All-America honors during his senior season in 1997 under coach Dan Gable.

But tonight when Ersland walks into his old stomping grounds, Carver-Hawkeye Arena, he will be the biggest Purdue fan in the building.

That's because Ersland is in his second season as head coach of the Boilermakers, and he has Purdue headed in the right direction.

Last year, the Boilermakers qualified eight wrestlers for the NCAA Championships in St. Louis, tying the school record for most national qualifiers in a season.

This season, Purdue is 7-2, 1-2 in the Big Ten. With duals coming up against No. 23 Minnesota, No. 9 Ohio State, No. 21 Indiana, No. 8 Michigan and No. 12 Rutgers, the Boilermakers are in the heart of their schedule. A win over Iowa would be a huge feather in the Boilermakers' caps.

It is all part of the building process for Ersland, who is enjoying the undertaking.

"The first thing I tried to do last year was try to build a culture with the right mindset. You have to operate on a high level every single day. You need to have a good work ethic and consistency. You've got to put your nose to the grindstone," Ersland said. "The kids have been great and everyone has welcomed me with open arms here. They said, 'We're all with you. Let's go.' We moved ahead quicker than I thought we would. Now we are trying to create the mindset that no matter where we go and no matter who we are wrestling, we know we are going to win."

Then again, Ersland has always been about winning and has always been associated with winners. He was a two-time state champion for Humboldt High School, winning Class 2A 191-pound state titles in 1991 and 1992 and helped Humboldt win state duals in 1992. From there he went to Iowa, where he wrestled for legendary Dan Gable on teams that included Lincoln McClravy, Jeff McGinness, Mike Mena, Joe Williams and Mark Ironside, to name just a few. He grew up watching Kevin Dresser wrestle for Iowa. He idolized Humboldt native Frank Gotch, who helped make professional wrestling popular. It was at a Gotch camp that Ersland developed a passion that would lead him to a career of coaching.

"That's where I fell in love with the sport," Ersland said. "That was instrumental in me going to Iowa."

At Iowa, Ersland got to watch Gable in action. He also got to watch the Iowa program up close and personal. He saw what it takes to make winners, the sacrifices and hard work it takes to get to the top. He has taken that knowledge everywhere he has gone and is now trying to instill those same values and concepts at Purdue.

"I felt fortunate to be surrounded by so many great people," Ersland said. "Gable was great. I had so many teammates who had success and went on to be successful coaches. I watched guys like Tom and Terry Brands, Mark Ironside and Lincoln McClravy and saw how they took care of business. I incorporated a lot of that into my coaching style."

Ersland got his start in coaching at Central Michigan, where he was a graduate assistant from 1997-99. From there he went to Northern Illinois, where he was the head assistant coach from 1999-2000. Ersland came back to Iowa for several years, coaching the Cyclone Wrestling Club and helping Trent Paulson and David Zabriske win national titles.

Prior to accepting the head coaching job at Purdue, Ersland spent eight seasons as an assistant coach at Nebraska under Mark Manning. He helped Jordan Burroughs win a pair of national championships. Burroughs went on to become a world and Olympic champion in freestyle. During his tenure at Nebraska, the Cornhuskers had a 102-41-2 record in duals and had 17 All-Americans.

And Ersland added to his ever-expanding wealth of knowledge in the sport.

"I had a lot of great experiences at Nebraska. Jordan Burroughs and I came in the same year and I had the good fortune to watch him win a pair of national championships and go on to win world and Olympic titles," Ersland said. "I've been very fortunate to have learned from a lot of different people. The one thing I've learned is that you have to be true to yourself. I've tried to take a little bit from everyone I have coached with. You make mistakes and then you learn not to make those same mistakes over again."

Now, Ersland is applying those lessons learned to his team at Purdue. He wants Purdue to compete for Big Ten and national titles. But first he has to change the culture, build the foundation, one block at a time.

"We have to make the room deeper. We've got some great kids, but we need 30-plus kids to make each other better," Ersland said. "You create depth in the room and there is no place to hide. You have to show up and do battle every single day."

"It's a tough task. When I took the Purdue job I knew we were going to get tested every night out. That forces you to develop as a coach and as a wrestler. That's an absolute positive for us here at Purdue."

**UPSET WINS NOT ENOUGH TO TAKE DOWN DEFENDING CHAMPS****Greg Mochen / / Purdue Exponent / Jan. 31, 2016**

The No. 24 Purdue wrestling team won several upset matches but it wasn't enough to take down No. 9 Ohio State in Holloway Gymnasium on Sunday afternoon.

The defending champion Buckeyes won 20-17. The Boilermakers actually won five of the 10 matches, however bonus points from the Buckeyes proved to be the difference.

"I think it's an indication of where we're going as a team, I think a lot of guys are getting better and you're seeing that," head coach Tony Ersland said. "... You've gotta knock the door down against good teams."

After a Purdue loss at 125 lbs, sophomore Luke Welch (12-10) upset No. 8 Johnni DiJulius (13-4) at 133 lbs in controversial fashion. A scramble in the second period resulted in Welch being credited with a takedown and a reversal for DiJulius being waved off. Up, 2-1 and on bottom to start the third, Welch protected his lead with solid defense, winning 3-1.

"I felt myself sliding off and I didn't want to give up the reversal so I hopped off and he caught my leg," Welch said.

The Boilermakers picked up a pair of victories at 149 and 157 lbs when junior Alex Griffin (12-5) won by technical fall and senior Doug Welch won by minor decision.

Facing his toughest opponent of the season, Purdue senior No. 7 Chad Welch (23-4) fell, 13-0, to Ohio State sophomore No. 2 Bo Jordan (12-0).

At 174 lbs Purdue sophomore Jacob Morrissey (13-9) upset Ohio State freshman No. 15 Myles Martin (22-4), 8-11. The key moment in the match came when Morrissey reversed Martin and picked up four back points near the edge of the mat during the second period, giving Morrissey a 7-4 lead.

Purdue junior Tanner Lynde (8-9) came close to picking up an upset of his own over Ohio State senior No. 13 Kenny Courts (14-6) at 184 lbs but gave up two takedowns in the third period and fell, 9-8.

After a win by Purdue senior Drake Stein (11-15), the dual was tied 17-17 with the deciding match left.

A second period takedown proved to be the difference as Purdue junior Tyler Kral (8-11) fell, 3-1, to Ohio State junior Nick Iavanello (16-3).

The Boilermakers' next dual is against Indiana at 1 p.m. on February 7.