

Hi-Line Athlete Profile: Anthony Weerheim

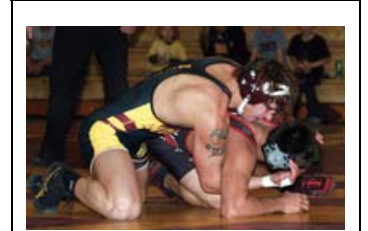
MSU-N's Weerheim very focused on the mat

George Ferguson

Wednesday, January 18th, 2012

Montana State University-Northern senior Anthony Weerheim knows what wrestling success feels like. He's a former Idaho state high school champion and he was an NJCAA All-American at Clackamas College in Oregon before coming to Northern.

Weerheim also knows what it's like to succeed for the Lights. Last season, he was stellar, ripping off win after win at 149 pounds. He went into the NAIA national tournament in March as the No. 1-ranked 149-pounder in the country. But that's where Weerheim's dream of being a national champion ended, then began again. Weerheim suffered an early injury at nationals and was upset in two matches, failing to reach all-american honors despite the incredible season he had.



MSU-Northern's Anthony Weerheim (top) is focused on winning an NAIA national championship in his final year as a Light.

But he says those losses at nationals only served to make him better, and he's come into his senior year with a vengeance. Recently dropping to 141 pounds, Weerheim went 6-0 between the Mile High Duals and a Mile High Open championship last weekend in Arizona. He says he learned a lot from last March's setback and he's moving forward, with another shot at a national championship firmly in his sights. Weerheim will compete at 141 for the remainder of the season, and being the leader that he is, he says it's not just what's best for him, but also what's best for the team.

As Northern prepares to host Northwest College on Thursday night, here's five questions with one of the unquestioned leaders in MSU-N's wrestling room.

HDN: What brought you to wrestle for the Lights?

Weerheim: I had the opportunity to come here from Clackamas with one of my good friends, so getting to wrestle with him again was important and we had a chance to do that here. Tyson (Thivierge) had a lot to do with it too. He was great right away. I liked him, I liked what he was about and the direction he wanted to go with the program. On our recruiting visit we got to go out and see the mountains, shoot some gophers and it just really fell into place for me. And he told us about the great crowds we have here. How the gym is packed for our duals. That was big for me. The support we get here is awesome. I love it."

HDN: Talk about some of the differences wrestling in junior college and the NAIA.

Weerheim: "That's tough because I think there is great competition at every level of wrestling and I faced a lot of good wrestlers in junior college. In junior college though, you're wrestling mainly freshman and sophomores, and since I've been here, I've wrestled a lot more older guys, so because of that, the level of competition has definitely gone up. But as far as training and wrestling goes, it's not too different. You have to work hard every day, you have to put in the time to be the best you can be. That goes for any level."

HDN: How does it feel to help contribute to putting Northern back amongst the best NAIA programs in the country?

Weerheim: "It's been awesome. I feel like we are way better than we were last year and Tyson said last year we were better than the year before. So I think things are headed in the right direction. Tyson has done a great job recruiting really good young guys and we have the older guys to push those younger kids and make them better. We're going in a really good direction right now."

HDN: Is the goal for you to win a national championship this year?

Weerheim: "That's it for me. If I were to finish second this season, I would be disappointed. I want to win it real bad. And if we wrestle like we're capable of at nationals, I think as a team we are good enough to win it too. For myself, I just have to be mentally prepared to wrestle one match at a time and that's what our team has to do too."

HDN: How much did last years' experience at nationals motivate you?

Weerheim: "It was a reality check for me. To be ranked No. 1, and to not win it, it sent me into a mini-depression for about a week. But it also lit a fire under me. I worked harder this summer than I ever have before. I came into the season so much more prepared. This is my senior year and I've been motivated from day one. Nationals last year motivated me more than anything."