



5th Annual Groundhog Day Tournament held in LeFrak Gymnasium attracted 17 teams and over 150 competitors.

Dear Alumni, Parents and Friends of Amherst Wrestling:

As always, it gives me great pleasure to update you on the accomplishments of the 2013-2014 Amherst Wrestling Club and the outlook for the upcoming season. This Newsletter serves as our most valuable resource to inform alumni, parents, and friends of the outstanding efforts, dedication, and commitment our amazing student-athletes have demonstrated during the season.

Last season presented major challenges with the absence of three of the program's most experienced juniors who studied abroad during the spring semester. Two of last year's top performers, three time national qualifier **Kody Weaver '15 (Southlake, Texas)** and two time national qualifier **Theo Agbi '15 (Brooklyn, NY)** left a major void in the upper weights. In addition, **Jim Hall '15 (Philadelphia, PA)**, who's impressive 11 victories in his first year, was absent in the middle of the line-up. Upper-class leadership and support is vital to the success of any program and it was obvious from the beginning that this young and inexperienced team would be affected with the absence of key upperclassman.

The season kicked off in January as we competed with cross-town rival UMass in *The Dual of Amherst*. Returning from his junior year studying at Dartmouth College was two time NCWA national qualifier **Feynman Liang '14 (Bellevue, WA)**. In the featured match of the day, Liang faced off with a Division II transfer in a high scoring match. However, after sustaining a rib injury in the third period, Liang was noticeably affected and edged out on points. With five of the eight matches featuring first year wrestlers for the Amherst program, this dual was a tremendous learning experience for the young squad.

In what has become one of the premier collegiate wrestling tournaments in the Northeast, the team played host to the 5th Annual Groundhog Day Wrestling Tournament held in LeFrak gymnasium. This event attracted 17 teams and over 150 competitors, including some of New England's top varsity and club teams making for an exciting day of competitive college wrestling on our campus. Amherst wrestler **Sean Gildea '15 (Reading, MA)** advanced to the semi-finals before dropping a thrilling overtime loss to a University of Albany wrestler. Unable to recover, Gildea lost his second match of the day in wrestle backs ultimately eliminating him from the consolation bracket. Teammate **Mark Hawkins '16 (Bronx, NY)** who was winless in his first year of competition, earned his first collegiate victory over his opponent from SUNY-Cortland before falling in consolation rounds. This year's tournament is scheduled to take place on Sunday, February 8th, 2015. Mark your calendars to come out and support the Lord Jeff wrestlers as they battle it out in LeFrak gymnasium against some of the top collegiate wrestlers in the Northeast.



New England Championships (University of New Hampshire, NH): **Feynman Liang '14 (141lb)** earning back points versus an RPI opponent.

The following week, the team traveled to Springfield Technical Community College to compete in the Annual Ram Duals. The Lord Jeff wrestlers faced two of the NCWA Northeast regions top ranked teams, M.I.T and RPI as well as the number ten nationally ranked junior college, Springfield Technical Community College. The Amherst wrestlers battled valiantly but were winless on the day. However, each match was a valuable learning experience that would help build confidence for future events. The event was also a good reminder for the young squad in setting realistic goals moving forward.

The New England Championships held at the University of New Hampshire was the final tune-up before the NCWA qualifiers being held in March. After a humbling day at the Ram Duals, a refocused group wrestled with more confidence and enthusiasm. Making his return from an early season injury,

Feynman Liang '14 made it to the finals in dominant form with a pin and technical fall. In one of the day's much anticipated match-ups, Liang came up just short in an exciting battle against a NCWA top ranked 141-pounder from the University of New Hampshire. Competing in his first ever wrestling event, **Yunpeng Du '14 (Nanjing, China)** inspired his teammates with two hard fought matches versus much more experienced opponents. You can learn a lot about a person who is competing in their first ever wrestling match and Du's effort earned him immediate respect from his teammates as well as his opponents. **Kali Robinson '17 (Dorchester, MA), Daniel Navas '17 (Jamaica, NY), Cody Pfund Pulliam '17 (Austin, TX) and Isaiah Holloway '17 (Oakdale, CT)** all made solid improvements from a week earlier by efficiently managing their matches, increasing their confidence and gaining experience with each match.



Ram Duals (Springfield Technical Community College, MA): **Fadi Hamati '14** (141lb) attacking a single leg versus his opponent from MIT.

Due to several injuries sustained during the previous week at the New England Championships, only two Amherst wrestlers were available to compete at the NCWA Northeast Conference Championships held at the University of New Hampshire. **Kali Robinson '17** and **Isaiah Holloway '17** faced the most competitive brackets of the season but came up just short of the qualifying rounds. However, both wrestled with confidence, stayed aggressive and accomplished individual match goals making for a very satisfying day. For the first time since the program's revival, Amherst did not have any NCWA qualifiers advancing to the national tournament.



NCWA Northeast Conference Championships (University of New Hampshire, NH): **Kali Robinson '17** (157lb) going for the fall versus a UMaine opponent.

Coaches Corner:

Theodore Roosevelt's legendary quote "The man in the Arena" hangs above my desk as a reminder of what is most important through competition and life. In summary, the quote states "it's not about how the strong man stumbled, but about the man who is actually in the arena striving valiantly". The quote is not only a daily motivation for myself, but eventually was adopted as our team mantra for the season.

Lacking the leadership and experience, I recognized we needed to adjust our training methods to fit the needs of our young group. Not only did we have to spend more time on technique instruction, we had to specifically learn how to train and practice. Individual and team accolades that have been a consistent part of our revived program needed to be replaced with more fundamental and realistic accomplishments that fit our current team. Sound defensive positioning on our feet, applying maximal stress from the top position, and relentless movement from the bottom position became our primary match goals. Keeping our goals simple and specific allowed our wrestlers to stay more present within the match and less burdened by the outcome.

From a coaching perspective, there's no greater reward than watching a young group develop through a daily process of hard work and determination. Setting and achieving realistic goals can be just as rewarding as any victory. I hope all of you will share in my satisfaction for the hard work and dedication these young men displayed as well as my excitement for our team's promising future.



NCWA Northeast Conference Championships (University of New Hampshire, NH): **Isaiah Holloway '17** (285lb) working from bottom position versus Alfred State opponent.

Expectations will be high this season with the return of **Kody Weaver '15, Theo Agbi '15** and **Jim Hall '15**. Combined with the impressive campaigns of **Kali Robinson '17** and **Isaiah Holloway '17**, expect intense competition from the Lord Jeff middle and upper weights this season. Other key names to keep an eye on are **Mark Hawkins '16, Sean Gildea '15, Daniel Navas '17, and Cody Pfund Pulliam '17**. The hard work and dedication of these student-athletes are the backbone to building a championship program and we look forward to their return. With a great off-season in the weight room combined with the valuable lessons learned this season, expect Lord Jeff wrestlers to be extremely motivated for the 2014-2015 season.

I would like to thank the class of 2014, **Feynman Liang**, **Fadi Hamati**, and **Yunpeng Du** for their contributions. Their hard work and commitment on and off the mat have set an example for our underclassman as to what it takes to be a successful student-athlete at Amherst College.

Senior captain **Feynman Liang** had expectations to contend for All-America honors but injuries during his sophomore and senior seasons prevented him from competing at the national tournament. After a remarkable 19 victories in his first year, Liang departs the program with an impressive record of 32-16. On top of his athletic accolades, Liang earned Academic-All American honors for the 2011-2012 seasons. After graduating from Amherst this spring, Liang will return for another year at Dartmouth College to earn a Bachelor of Engineering degree.



Senior captain **Feynman Liang '14** (141lb) leaves the program with an impressive three year record of 32-16.

A three-year participant, **Fadi Hamati**, contributions and effort are the foundation of any great program. A student of mixed martial arts, Hamati wanted to expand his grappling technique by joining the wrestling club. He soon became addicted to the one-on-one combat and has been one of the team's hardest workers. Hamati also excelled in the classroom, earning National Collegiate Wrestling Association Academic All-American honors in 2013. After graduating with honors in biology, Hamati's future plans include clinical research and attending medical school.

First-year participant **Yunpeng Du** had a fearless attitude and brought unlimited enthusiasm to the practice room this season. He didn't wrestle many matches or ever have his hand raised in victory but the lessons of commitment, perseverance and hard work will earn him many victories in life. Graduating with honors in Mathematics and Political Science, Du's future interests include working on environmental protection and sustainable development in his home country of China.

Last year's seniors were honored at the *Annual Night of the Spladle*, a yearly tradition when the wrestling team gathers one last time for reflection, laughter, and a large amount of food.

With the many challenges we faced this year, nothing would have been accomplished without the help and support of *volunteer* Assistant Coach **Justin Herbert**. Herbert's experience and insight have been vital in the development and success of our team and individual accomplishments. A 2006 graduate of

Franklin & Marshal in Pennsylvania, Coach Herbert successfully defended his research this May earning him a PhD from the department of geosciences at UMass. Daily I preach how academics and athletics during the four years of college are the foundation for the next forty years of life; Justin is a living example of that process and a tremendous role model for our program.

As much as I enjoy sharing the stories and many accomplishments of our student-athletes, it's important for all of you to understand the challenges we continue to face in building our program. The number one challenge is building and maintaining our roster numbers. How can you help; we need to continue spreading the word about our program, the positives of competing on a national level within the NCWA, while continuing to have a positive experience with everything Amherst College has to offer. We've begun to reach out to many of the top preparatory schools and high schools throughout the country in an effort to attract more elite academic wrestler applicants. We also want to continue to build on our legacies and attract your sons, grandsons and great-grandsons to be a part of the institution and sport that meant so much to you. So please, continue to spread the word and share your personal experiences on why Amherst College and our Amherst Wrestling program would be a great fit.

Thank you for your continued support, and we hope to see you at one of our home events during the 2014-2015 season. Have a wonderful and safe summer!

Go Jeffs!

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