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When a high school wrestling program becomes successful, the ability to remain successful relies on the older wrestlers teaching the younger members of the team what it takes to reach a high level. Then when those younger wrestlers become upperclassmen, it is their turn to do the teaching.

Everyone is teaching, everyone is learning and everyone is excelling at Uwharrie Charter Academy.

Under veteran coach Chris Waddell, the Eagles are undefeated on the season at 29-0, including 4-0 in the Piedmont Athletic Conference, heading into Thursday's Senior Night home battle with Wheatmore.

"They take ownership because they believe in what we are trying to do," said Waddell.

"There's accountability and hard work. The kids are holding each other accountable and when your peers hold you accountable, it becomes a big deal. We've always believed in a family atmosphere."

The Eagles are well balanced as their starting lineup includes three seniors, three juniors, five sophomores and two freshmen.

"I've been really pleased with how the kids have worked," Waddell said. "It's not easy in our society now to do things on a consistent basis and the kids have dealt well with adversity. We've taken the mantra to not accept excuses."

UCA has been led by senior Doug Bowles, who is 38-4 in the 170-pound class, junior Aldo Hernandez, who is 39-3 at 132, and junior Grayson Roberts, who is 38-4 on the season.

This year has been a bit different for UCA. The Eagles were in the Yadkin Valley Conference before realignment meant a much more difficult conference slate when they joined the PAC..

"It's definitely much tougher," Waddell said. "In the old conference, I don't think we ever had a match closer than 20 points. This year, we just beat Trinity by three. The competition is definitely ramped up. In the other conference, wrestling was really an afterthought. It would take longer to travel to a team than it would to wrestle them. In Randolph, teams are fielding full teams."

Tougher competition is something Waddell said he covets.

"I love the new conference just for the fact that everyone always brings fans," he said. "It's a good atmosphere. Trinity was a great match."

There is one upcoming meet which Waddell said will be emotional. The Eagles travel to Southwestern Randolph in a few weeks, the place where Waddell coached for 16 seasons.

"That's going to be crazy," he said. "I haven't coached in that gym since I left. I've been back a few times to see kids wrestle, but I haven't coached there since."

Waddell pointed to a strong middle school wrestling program for helping the varsity Eagles maintain their success. More than 35 wrestlers are currently on the UCA Middle School team.

The UCA wrestlers are once again a serious threat to go deep in the dual meet and individual state championship tournaments. Everyone is learning, everyone is teaching and everyone is excelling.

As usual.