



### **Top Ranked Wrestling Magic Eye National Duals Jan. 10-11**

Despite it being the mid-season point in the wrestling season, crunch time is here for the number one nationally ranked Magic. They'll head to Cedar Falls, Iowa this weekend (Jan. 10-11) for a mat war. This will be a major event but it will also be a preview of the NJCAA National meet. The dual meet format differs from the National Tourney, but is still helpful to the grapplers.

"I think that's a bigger benefit than probably what most people think," said volunteer assistant coach **David Mirikitani**. "But, it would also sure be nice to win the National Duals for the first time in school history. You go to win the tournament."

The Duals are a collection of the nation's best teams at all collegiate levels, including NCAA Division I. To be invited, a program has to have finished in the top eight in the nation the year before. Meramec took a second place trophy last year at the Duals, as well as a second at Nationals. Defending champ Iowa Central, Labette (KS), and Colby (KS) are other nationally ranked JUCO powers that the Magic will be vying against. Potential upsets and high quality parity make the National Duals one of the top events of the season.

"You could argue the electricity is a little more (than at Nationals) because if we wrestle Iowa Central in the finals it's ten-on-ten," said Mirikitani. "The dual with Iowa Central, on paper, there's a lot of toss-up matches - there's two we're supposed to win, two we're supposed to lose, and six toss-ups."

Iowa Central remains a main nemesis of Meramec in their quest for the program's first National Duals title and National title, edging the Magic at both events a year ago. But, the teams' chemistry is quite different - while Meramec walked away from Nationals with three national individual champions in '08, Iowa Central only had one, yet had enough team points for the national title.

Mirikitani also sees the two major events tied together psychologically, and the groundwork being set for Nationals at the Duals, despite the format difference.

"I think you'd almost want to lose as many matches as you can and still win the National Duals because then you got stuff you can talk to the guys about in order to improve," reasoned Mirikitani. "You don't want to get killed because then guys will feel like 'Man, I got a BIG hill to climb!' The problem you want to have is where you go out and shut everybody out and somehow win every match and kill everybody and look like Oklahoma State or Iowa State, and look that good and then we have to get them to not read their press clippings. I don't think that's going to happen. You just want to be real competitive."

The Magic should have no trouble being competitive, especially with returning national champions **Aaron Senzee** (Kearney, MO) at 141. Also anchoring the lineup is former four time state prep champ **Colin Pierce** (Kearney, MO) at 133 who has placed at every open meet he's competed in this season.

“Colin wrestles a lot like Aaron (Senzee) because they trained together for so many years, went to the same tournaments, had the same coaching,” said Mirikitani. “Colin’s probably as good as I thought he was when I recruited him but he’s probably a lot better than a lot of other people thought he was. If you watch him wrestle, physically he’s not imposing. He’s not verbally very outspoken. He just goes out there and gets after it. There’s a guy from Iowa Central (Billy Murphy) at 133 that everyone in the country thinks is going to kill him. That’s good motivation for Colin.”

Several other talented wrestlers are also “getting after it” for the Magic. Returning All-American **Donald Woods** (McCluer North) holds down the 165 pound weight class, while freshman **Lillashawn Coleman** (Oak Park, IL) is giving opponents fits at 125. Coleman won a championship at the ultra-tough University of Missouri Open Nov. 23.

“He’s really too hard to wrestle because he’s so tall,” said Mirikitani. “He wrestles tall - they make you wrestle long. Most guys at 125 are not 5’8 or 5’9 so they don’t know how to wrestle a guy like that and it gives guys fits. He’s really competent in a few positions and he wrestles most his matches in those positions. That’s what a lot of wrestling is - no one is good at everything so let’s wrestle where I’m really good and you’re not.”

Also solid wrestlers for Meramec are **Travis Pettengill** (Kearsley, MI) at 197 and **Anthony Almanza** (Ponway, CA) at 157. Much is also on the line for thirty ninth year head coach Ron Mirikitani - he is three dual meet wins away from a milestone number of 450, a number that takes a backseat to him after the success of the program and the athletes.

“If you ask my dad, the 450 is just the nature of doing it a lot of years and having a lot of dual meets and being a good coach,” said David Mirikitani. “To me, it could be number 227 but if he wins the National Duals and we can win the Nationals that’s really what matters.”

### **St. Charles West Repeats As Meramec Tourney Champs**

Despite losing star guard Kramer Soderburg to graduation, the St. Charles West basketball team repeated as the 31st Annual Meramec Holiday Festival Tournament champions. The elite 16 team tourney wrapped up play Dec. 30 with St. Charles West outpacing Hazelwood Central 62-54 in the title game.

The Warriors were the sixth seed and made a statement with wins over the tourney’s top three seeds - Hazelwood Central (1), McCluer (2), and Lafayette (3). Senior guard **Alex Bazzell** scored 23 points against the Hawks, while sophomore teammate **Christian Kirk**, a 6’7” forward, scored 20.

Both Bazzell and Kirk were named to the All-Tournament team, along with **Mookie Valandra** (Vianney), **Vinnie Raimondo** (Webster Groves), **Kyle Peasel** (Troy), **Ryan Pierson** (CBC), **Lonnie Boga** (McCluer), **Jerrell Partlow** (McCluer), **Bryce Foster** (Hazelwood Central), and **Connell Crossland** (Hazelwood Central).

In the tourney’s third place game, McCluer erased an 18 point second half deficit to defeat Webster Groves in overtime, 70-65.

### **Magic Return From AZ Tourney 11-6; Head To Regional Play**

As the pivotal second half of the season begins, the men’s basketball team will see a steady diet of Region XVI opponents and fewer independent teams. The Magic returned from play in the Scottsdale (AZ) Tournament with two wins and a defeat, and an 11-6 overall record. In the Scottsdale Tournament in the Phoenix, AZ area, the Magic opened play Jan. 1 with a 52-50 loss to Lakeland Community College, despite holding a 10 point halftime lead. A day later, against Madison Area Technical College, the Magic held on for the win, 62-58. In that game, Meramec had a 14 point halftime lead.

In January, the team will face a tough challenge in nemesis Penn Valley (Kansas City) on the road Jan. 16. The Scouts have been ranked one in the nation much of the season and defeated Meramec in the Region XVI title game last March. A day later, the Magic will travel up the highway to battle North Central, also a regional opponent. Their first area game for the month will be at Lindenwood, taking on their JV squad Jan. 9 at 6 p.m.

The Magic have played one regional opponent thus far this season, thrashing STLCC-Florissant Valley 87-52 on Dec. 23. The Magic had five players in double figures: **Rodney Ford** (Affton) with 16, **Danny Ortiz** (Fort Zumwalt South) with 12, **Drew Moore** (Northwest) with 11, **Dallis Johnson** (Lafayette) with 11, and **Eddie White** (Parkway West) with 10 points.

### **Women's Basketball Squad Faces Tough January Schedule**

Back from a two game outing in Florida, the women's basketball team (7-10) will also hit the toughest part of their schedule in January as they face several Region XVI rivals. At the top of the list is Cottey College from Nevada, MO who will be visiting the Magic on Jan. 9. Cottey ended Meramec's season last year 65-56 in the semi-finals of the Region XVI Tournament.

A week after Cottey comes calling, the team will head west to Kansas City for a two game road trip against Penn Valley on Jan. 16, and North Central in Trenton, MO the following day. The decisive month also includes contests against other regional teams STLCC-Florissant Valley (Jan. 21 at home) and STLCC-Forest Park (Jan. 28 on the road) before wrapping up with a road re-match against Cottey in Nevada Jan. 31.

Leading the way will be sophomore guard **Capri Savage** (Orofino, ID). In a recent 81-54 loss to Brevard College in Florida, Savage collected 21 of the Magic's points. She is the team's top three point shooter as well. Sophomores **Molly Zehner** (Oakville) and **Cynthia Abernathy** (Timberland) have also performed well.

Two freshman sensations, **Aretasha Barry** (Hazelwood East) and **Latavia Doss** (Francis Howell), have also contributed strongly to the offense. Doss had 13 points in the Brevard game.

### **Brandt Heads Slate Of April Hall Of Fame Inductees**

When the annual Magic Hall Of Fame Induction Banquet unfolds in April, one face heading into the shrine will be familiar to all - 28 year veteran athletic secretary **Karen Brandt**. Brandt will be well-rested at the April event as she's retiring from her post the preceding month, much to the dismay of coaches and staff that she has served with outstanding work for nearly three decades. Brandt has been a model of efficiency and professionalism, assembling numerous program books for various sports and tournaments, as well as offering assistance to anyone within reach of the athletic offices with a question.

Brandt was elected for induction as a "first ticket" nominee, along with two others on the ballot for the first time - basketball player **Marvin Moorehead**, and star wrestler **Bob Georger**.

As a freshman in the 1988-'89 season, Moorehead led the team to a 27-9 record and a second place national trophy. A year later, the team racked up a 28-5 mark with the jump shooting guard, as well as a number one national ranking during the season. The 28 wins remain a school record for one season. The accolades poured in his sophomore year as he was named All-Conference, All-Region, and All-American. He averaged nearly 20 points a game as a sophomore. Head coach Randy Albrecht calls Moorehead the single best player he's ever coached through 31 years at Meramec.

Bob Georger wrestled for coach **Ron Mirikitani** from 1972-'74 and was a two-time All-American with a career record of 50-12-2. He was also the first two-time All-American at Meramec. Georger also captured a championship at the All-Missouri Tournament, grappling against all NCAA levels. He went on to continue his career at Florida International where he set a record for most wins in two years with a 62-17-4 mark.

Following graduation from college, Georger became a teacher and wrestling coach at DeSoto High School, where he has been for 32 years.

## **Baseball's Schrader Commits To Div. I St. Louis University**

The baseball team and head coach **Tony Dattoli** are continuing their trend of placing players at prestigious baseball programs following Meramec. The latest commitment has 6'5" pitcher **Michael Schrader** headed to NCAA Division I St. Louis University in the fall of 2009.

What is impressive about the placement is that Schrader has yet to throw an official game pitch yet for the Magic with the season not yet underway. The lefthander is a St. Charles West High graduate.

Schrader marks the second Meramec player to head to SLU on a scholarship in two years - All-American shortstop **Jon Myers** (Fort Zumwalt South) is currently at SLU after playing for the Magic for two years.