The nationally second-ranked STLCC-Meramec wrestling squad dominated the Meramec Duals this past weekend (Jan. 29-30), winning all four dual meets, three against ranked teams, and going a collective 25-5 in matches actually wrestled.

The Magic, under interim head coach Nick Vogt, defeated Rochester (Minn.) 39-12 and thirteenth-ranked Southwestern Oregon 26-18 on Friday night. The next day they disposed of tenth-ranked Iowa Lakes 34-17, and fifteenth-ranked Rend Lake 32-15. The match of the weekend pitted Meramec’s Craig Chiles (Hillsboro) against second ranked Eric Ellington of Rend Lake, who had defeated Chiles twice last season in 133 lb. action.

Chiles came in with a game plan and worked it to perfection, frustrating the ultra-quick Ellington by grappling the entire first period from his knees. The wary Ellington was slowed down and thrown off his usual style by the tactic as the period ended in a 0-0 stalemate.

“I tried that out and if it wasn’t going to work I was going to go to another game plan, but it worked out,” said Chiles. “You take something away from somebody’s arsenal . . . I just took away his main thing.”

In the second period the cat-and-mouse game continued with Ellington taking a 1-0 lead on an escape. In the decisive third period, Chiles tied the score with an escape of his own, then found the opening he had been waiting two years for.

“I knew what the score was and I knew I had to be careful but I also had to get after him and keep going, pushing forward,” said the sophomore. “That’s what I did, and it frustrated him a little bit more. He made a mistake and I capitalized on it. His leg just came up a little bit too far, so I just took it. His other one came to me. I reached for it and got it.”

Chiles’ takedown, the only one of the match, gave him a 3-1 edge with a little over a minute left. A frantic Ellington scored an escape but could not score further, and an elated Chiles had achieved a 3-2 victory.

“That’s what I wanted to do, that’s what I came here today to do, I did it,” said a triumphant Chiles. “You get to wrestle one of the top kids in the country and you beat him. That’s a good feeling to know that you’re up there and you can do it.”

Also coming away with a big win was freshman Tyler Holloway (Brookfield, MO) against Iowa Lakes’ Tim Francisco in a 141 lb. match. Holloway held onto a 2-1 lead after one period, a 4-3
lead after two, and walked away a 6-4 winner, something the former four-time high school state champ is used to.

“I started off kind of slow, ended up getting the first takedown which is pretty nice, it’s always huge,” said Holloway. “He’s a tough kid, he just kept coming and coming, but eventually I just wore him out, and myself out!”

Later in the day Holloway would bump up to the 149 lb. class against Rend Lakes’ Matthew Chandler. The match would quickly develop into an all-or-none gamble for Chandler, who went for the kill quick.

“He took me down right off the start. I got back up to my feet, he shot in again and was in deep and he got behind me and he tried lifting me straight up taking me over his head and he came down and landed right on his stomach,” said Holloway. “He laid there and I just pinned him. I guess that knocked the wind out of him.”

Holloway was glad to escape his heavier opponent as quickly as he did. “He’s a big boy! The way he took me down the first time I thought ‘I’m in for a long match’. But, to catch him like that, I’ll take it. It’s rough moving up to bigger guys,” said Holloway.

In the 165 lb. weight class, Anthony Saulle (Delran, NJ) steamrolled his opponents all weekend, racking up four first period pins, including one over eighth-ranked Jake McCoy of Southwestern Oregon. Saulle says an aggressive style has always been to his liking.

“I go into every match trying to get a pin so I can get off the mat real quick,” said Saulle. “I’m a go-getter, definitely. I can’t sit still, I got to keep going. I feel you out for like five seconds, then if I tie up with you and I can pull you around, I’m going - boom!”

Also successful on the weekend was freshman John Vogt (Ste. Genevieve) with four wins, including two pins. Vogt is now 10-0 in dual meets and ranked fourth at 174. Sharky Slyter (Quincy, KS) won one match and gained three forfeit wins, and Deron Winn (Liberty, MO) won all four matches. The Magic move on to the Missouri Valley Open next Saturday, Feb. 6, in Marshall, MO.

Men’s Basketball Outlasts Lewis and Clark In Re-Match From Dome

In a critical late season conference game, the men’s basketball team defeated twelfth ranked Lewis and Clark 60-48 Saturday night (Jan. 30). The win avenges a Nov. 10 loss, 66-58, at the Edward Jones Dome and boosts the Magic to 15-9.

The game featured spotty officiating as well as an uncharacteristically low halftime score with Meramec holding a 19-18 edge. The second half saw the score stay close until the closing moments when the Magic pulled away for the win. The tight defense is a trademark of the Magic - they’re third in the nation in fewest points allowed with a 59.7 per game average.

Dallis Johnson (Lafayette) had 17 points as the high scorer to go with 9 rebounds. Josh Dale (Affton) had 14 points along with 7 rebounds. Freshman guard Dietrick Sooter (Pierce City, MO) scored 11 of his 13 points in the second half.

Meramec moves on to yet another re-match hoping to avenge an earlier loss in 17-6 Penn Valley. The Magic lost to Penn on Jan. 24, 64-60, in a Region XVI game critical to post season seeding.
Meramec is 3-1 in regional play with 4 games remaining and will host the Region XVI Tournament Mar. 5-6. Meramec plays host to Penn Valley on Saturday, Feb. 6 at 3:00.

Women’s Basketball Almost Snaps Streak Against Lewis and Clark

They almost did it. The Meramec women’s basketball squad pushed conference foe Lewis and Clark to the wire Jan. 30, dropping a last-second 58-55 defeat. The Magic have not beaten the Trailblazers since 1998.

Meramec trailed at the half 26-23, but came out battling in the second half. The game was a nip and tuck affair throughout, with several tie scores and no greater than a five point lead by either team.

Freshman guard Sherie Cole (Hazelwood Central) hit a three pointer with 1:52 left to tie the game at 52. After the Trailblazers made a bucket, freshman guard Courtney Panus (Pattonville) went to the free throw line and made both shots, creating a 54-54 tie with 1:08 left. However, a disputed, delayed out-of-bounds call went against Meramec, sealing their doom.

Panus was the high scorer with 11 points, while freshman center Kasei Evans (Hazelwood Central) collected 9 points and five rebounds. The loss drops Meramec to 9-11 on the season.

In February, the team wraps up its season and moves to the Region XVI Tournament Feb. 20-27 at STLCC-Florissant Valley. The region consists of Meramec, Penn Valley, Cottey College, North Central, Florissant Valley, and Forest Park.