



sports

Luke Cramer: Ending journey to the podium

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With the start of a new year, the traditional saying of “New Year, New Me” has started to come with the list of New Year’s resolutions. For some, those resolutions include more exercise, eating better or saving money.

For one AU athlete, his goal is much greater than those, his goal is to stand on top of the podium at the NCAA Division II National Championships.

Redshirt senior, Luke Cramer, plans on going out of his wrestling career with a big bang.

“There is a lot of things that can happen in the rest of the year,” Cramer said. “I mean for my last two months here the end goal is definitely to be on top of the podium in the next couple months.”

After attending the National Tournament with then teammate Michael Labry after the 2016-2017 season.

Labry was named the National Champion in the 133 lb weight class and was the first champion since 1996.

Cramer placed third at that tournament but learned a lot from his experiences and from watching his teammate.

“I had a lot of emotion being behind Labry wrestling,” Cramer said. “I think he was a good inspirational desire in leading the team and into this year, I think it is my step, as well as the other team leaders to drive the team to reach our goals.”

This season has brought nothing less than what Cramer had hoped for. Along with his third place finish last year, he finished with a 29-4 record and led the team in technical falls.

This year, he is 10-0 and is No. 1 ranked in the 197 pound class. Cramer has been tweaking his technique and takes each match as a test in continuing down the road to the final podium.

“This season has been really relaxed so far so I took some time off to work on my technique,” Cramer said. “The matches that I have wrestled have kind of progressed.

National duals was a good test with some good opponents but I have to keep working on my offense and conditioning and those are big factors.”

Football player and coach Vince Lombardi once said, “Individual commitment to a group effort—that is what makes a team work.”

Despite every opportunity to help himself, Cramer is always focusing on helping his teammates as well. Whether that be in or out of the practice room, he is always wanting to better the team as a whole.

“Other than my personal goals, I like helping the team out,” Cramer said. “Doing technique sessions and helping in and out of the practice room with a few of the guys and no matter what, at the end of the year my goal is to be on top of the podium but also to have the whole team there. Our team goal is to win a national title.”

The want to help others and being a role model comes from Cramer’s family and watching his older brother wrestle. A passion that started when he was just four years old.

“My brother and I from a young age, would beat eachother up all the time,” Cramer said. “There were broken bones, bloody noses, and stitches. Over the time of growing up with my brother, I think that was the biggest driven factor and him also kind of being in front of me and doing well and watching him succeed has driven me to succeed as well.”

Cramer laughed as he remembered the amount of casts and stitches he had received.

He said he went through about four sets of casts and five sets of stitches from the times his brother and him would wrestle around.

Cramer’s brother finished in fourth and sixth in the nation during his time at Tiffin University. Friendly sibling rivalry set in as Cramer’s mentality to always do better ran through his mind. During his time at Oak Harbor High School, Cramer finished with an overall record of 139-40 and was 42-5 as a senior. In 2012, Cramer wrestled at the Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA)



Luke Cramer during a match earlier this season. Cramer is one of two wrestlers that are currently undefeated.

Division II State Championship Tournament and placed fourth in the 138 class after being pinned by Millersburg native Max Rohskopf.

After a year of hard work, Cramer became Oak Harbor’s 22nd State Champion in 2014 after a 16-4 major decision against Clarksville Clinton-Massie’s Wyatt Running in the 170 lb class.

A fourth place finish turns into a first place finish and a state title. The only hope is that history will repeat itself and his third place finish at nationals last year will turn into yet another title behind his name for this year.

After a successful ending to his high school career, the focus was now on his college career.

After deciding to not attend a Division I school and visiting other schools, the final decision came down to Cramer’s personal interests of the outdoors and the distance.

“I didn’t want to go Division I because the one thing of the school and wrestling is it is a lot to handle and they try to put wrestling before school,” Cramer said. “A lot of visits I went to like North Carolina, and other big schools did that. Ashland is close to home, I like being out in the country and outdoors, you can drive 5 minutes out of Ashland and be in Amish land so that is one factor that is really nice.”

Cramer also attributes his decision to come to Ashland, and major in nursing, based on the coaches. He said that he decided on Ashland because the coaches were nice and had a personal interest in him and his talents.

With only about two months left in his wrestling career, the stakes are high and so is Cramer’s focus.

Each match is a new test that brings learning opportunities and new found motivation. What really does motivate an undefeated college wrestler? Easy, music.

“I am usually very relaxed [at meets], I don’t like to get emotional usually,” Cramer said. “If you watch me on the side, I have my headphones in and usually listening to country. It keeps me more relaxed then getting up, warming up and everything else. I feel like if you let your emotions get to you, you won’t wrestle the same.”

With the end of the season nearing in the next few months, Cramer will leave an unforgettable legacy behind in hopes that others can learn from it. His biggest piece of advice is it helps to have teammates behind you to help the drive.

“Over the time wrestling I think it is more a driven factor in having teammates beside you and to help you out,” Cramer said. “During the off season it helps out and keeps you in the mental capacity and keeps your routine together

THE WEEK AHEAD

Women’s Basketball

Jan. 20 @ Northwood

Jan. 27 vs. Tiffin

Feb. 1 @ Wayne State

Men’s Basketball

Jan. 20 @ Northwood

Jan. 27 vs. Tiffin

Feb. 1 @ Wayne State

Swimming & Diving

Jan. 20 @ Saginaw Valley State

Wrestling

Jan. 20 vs. Lake Erie

Jan. 23 @ Davenport

Jan. 26 -27 @ Regional II

Duals

Track & Field

Jan. 20 @ Tiffin Open

Jan. 26 @ Findlay Elite

Feb. 2 @ Akron Blue/Gold

for wrestling. I think having a good team behind yourself is the biggest factor.”

Cramer started his incredible journey when he was at a young age and his advice for the younger kids that want to get into it is just stay with it.

“For younger kids growing up into wrestling, I don’t think overdoing a lot of things but staying with it and developing is probably the biggest key to becoming the best,” Cramer said.

AU to honor 50 years of Kates Gymnasium

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It is a Saturday afternoon in the middle of winter, snow is coming down outside.

Fans are pouring into Charles Kates Gymnasium for an action packed day of college basketball. They walk into the King Street entrance to the complex, where they see the history, tradition and memorabilia of over 50 years of Ashland Eagles basketball.

Fans continue their walk through the doors to the entrance of the beautiful gymnasium where they find their seats and anxiously await tip-off.

This tradition has been prevalent since 1967, where fans would file into Kates Gymnasium to cheer on the Ashland University men’s and women’s basketball teams.

2017 marked the 50th year anniversary of Kates Gymnasium and the Eagles basketball teams will be honoring this anniversary on Jan. 27th as they play host to Tiffin University.

The alumni department will be inviting players and coaches from the past 50 years back to Kates Gymnasium for the celebration of rich history of the gym.

“We gathered a list of all men’s and women’s basketball alumni and sent a save the date postcard in the fall announcing the event,” Jeff Alix, Director of Alumni and Parent Relations said. “We have since sent out formal invitations and followed up with multiple email reminders.”

A reception will be held on the morning of the 27th to gather the alumni of both men’s and women’s

basketball to share in stories and fellowship, followed by the games in which the anniversary will be recognized.

During the reception, both head coaches John Ellenwood and Robyn Fralick will have an opportunity to speak to the alumni and show their appreciation for the program.

For John Ellenwood, who is in his ninth season at the helm of the Ashland University men’s basketball program, is excited to be involved in such a traditionally rich program.

“It is exciting to be part of such a tradition rich program,” Ellenwood said. “Every season, I hear more and more stories about the past coaches and players and it is neat to add to the tradition with current players.”

The men’s program, which began in 1920, has seen ten NCAA tournament appearances with the latest coming in 2016.

The height of the men’s program was from 1968 to 1978, when seven of those ten appearances occurred including two Final Four appearances.

The men’s team is currently on a nine game winning streak as they hold a 14-3 record on the 2017-2018 season.

For Ellenwood, it is special for him to be the head coach of a program that has had so many strong coaches that have helped build the program.

The women’s program, which dates back to 1967, the year Kates Gymnasium was built, has seen seven NCAA appearances. Two of those appearances were national

championships in 2013 and 2017, and runner-ups in 2012.

Currently, the women’s team is at the height of the program with a record of 17-0 on the year and holds the longest Division II women’s basketball streak for consecutive wins with 54.

Although Kates Gymnasium dates back to 1967, it saw heavy renovations in 2013 that completely changed the complexion of the gym. Thanks to the support of Sherrill Hudson, a whole gutting of the gym was made possible, which included a new floor, new bleachers, air conditioning and many other qualities that made the gymnasium prestigious.

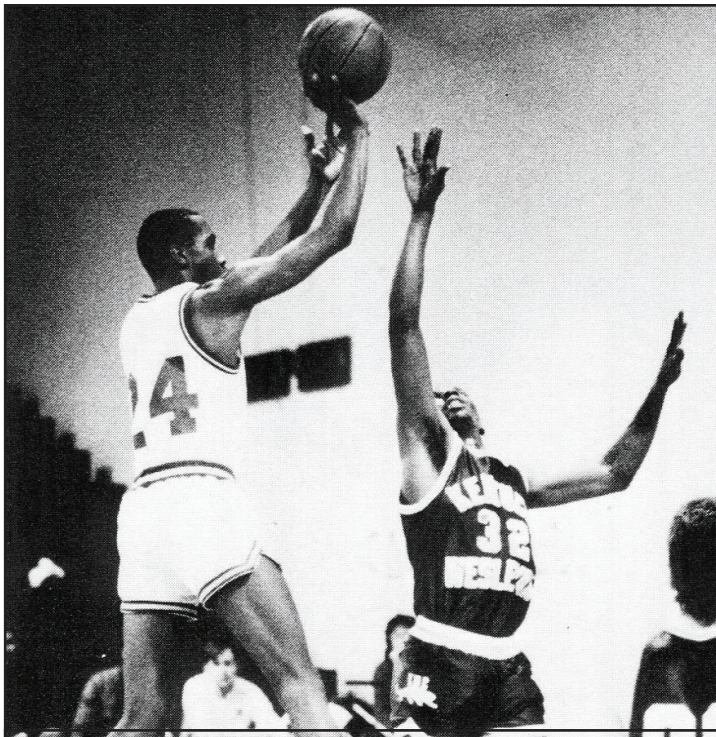
After these changes, Kates Gymnasium became one of the premiere places to play in the Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (GLIAC).

“Kates Gym was in desperate need of a “face lift”...the renovations helped with easier game/practice set up, it was a better sell to recruits than the old metal bleachers and wooden backboards on the side baskets,” Ellenwood said.

This 50th year reunion will give an opportunity for former players to see the gymnasium and how lively it has become with the atmosphere that the teams, and fans, bring to the gymnasium.

Ellenwood said that this reunion will give an opportunity for his current players to understand that they are a part of something bigger than themselves.

The expected attendance for this reunion is about 100 people from both past mens and womens teams and there will be a few players who



A player on the 1987 men’s basketball team going up against a defender.



The 1998 women’s basketball team and their coaching staff.

played over 50 years ago in attendance as well.

“Bringing alumni back to campus around programs that they invested so much time and energy in while they were here allows them to reflect and reminisce on all the

games, practices and time they spent together,” Alix said. “There is a special bond created between teammates because of so many shared experiences. This is a great opportunity for them to share all the stories and memories.”