

Led by strong senior core, Dickinson boys powerlifters heading back to state

By JAMES LACOMBE The Daily News | Posted: Thursday, March 31, 2016 10:30 pm

DICKINSON

A team Dickinson coach Earl Ricicar calls a once-in-a-lifetime collective will look to go out on top at the state powerlifting championships Saturday in Abilene.

“This senior group of kids, they’re very special,” Ricicar, who is in his 11th season at the helm of the Dickinson powerlifting program, said. “For me to have another set of those kids, collectively, this might be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.”

Ricicar credits support from the school district and athletic department for the success of the powerlifting program as a whole, and he said some of the factors that make this year’s senior core in particular special include them being naturally self-driven and adopting a strong work ethic early on in the powerlifting program.

“As freshmen when I started with them, they learned the importance of hard work and what it can get for you,” Ricicar said.

At last month’s regional meet, Dickinson seniors Kaylond North (242-pound weight class), Anietie Etuk (275-pound), Chance Harmanson (super heavyweight), Cournelious Vaughans (181-pound) and Chien Phan (132-pound) all won regional gold medals, while the team’s rookie, sophomore Pablo Cavazos (148-pound), tied for third place to qualify for state.

Now heading back to state, this year’s defending state champion Gators team is headlined by North, a three-time state medalist who won gold last year in his individual weight class and has his sights set on back-to-back titles.

Throughout the season, North was happy to impart his simple secret to success on the next generation of Gators lifters.



Dickinson Powerlifters

Dickinson powerlifters (from left) Kaylond North, Chien Phan, Cournelious Vaughans, Pablo Cavazos, Chance Harmanson and Anietie Etuk will compete at the state powerlifting meet this weekend.

“The main question is, ‘How’d you get so strong?’” North said. “I just work. Just put in the work.”

A three-time state qualifier, Etuk finished third in a lower weight class (242-pound) last year and will be looking to end his high school career by taking the top prize Saturday at 275 pounds.

“I’ve been wanting this for a while now, so it would be pretty special for me, to win it all at state,” Etuk said.

The same goes for Vaughans, who competed at 165 pounds last year at state and earned a silver medal, as well as Harmanson, who finished third at the championships last year.

“This time, there’s a lot more competition than last year, (but) ... we’re working harder than ever,” Vaughans said. “The team isn’t as big, so we all put in more effort — more than ever.”

Phan and Cavazos will be trying to earn their first-ever state medals. Phan competed at last year’s state meet with a sixth-place finish while Cavazos will be making the trip to state for the first time.

Ricicar said that there will be some teams at Saturday’s state meet with greater numbers than the six who will be representing the Gators, but he still likes Dickinson’s chances to repeat as state champions as a team.

The Texas High School Powerlifting Association state meet will be held at the Taylor County Expo Center in Abilene, with opening ceremonies scheduled to begin at 8:30 a.m.