

Six Orleans matmen set sights on state championships this weekend

After successfully earning league, class and sectional titles, six Orleans County wrestlers will now be going for the top prize — a state championship in competition to be held at the Alumni Arena on the University at Buffalo campus Friday and Saturday.

The local contingent includes Mike Crane and Justine Hartway from Medina, Mike Sanders from Albion, Andrew Grillo from Holley and Torry Tooley and Donald Williams from Kendall, all seniors.

This will be the second appearance at the state championships for both Williams and Hartway and the first for the others.

Williams placed fifth at the state championships last year at Syracuse and earned a return trip by capturing a second straight Section V title. He brings a 35-0 record into the competition.

"My goal is to get to the finals," said Williams. "I've got to wrestle hard but the experience I got last year helps."

"Donald has been there and he knows he can compete with those kids," said Kendall coach Jim Sauberan.

Hartway, who has overcome an injury plagued season to win his fourth Section VI Class AA title and his second Section VI championship, previously made it to the states his freshman year in 2001.

"I won't be as nervous this

time," said Hartway who is 18-3 on the season. "I feel a lot better now and I just hope to keep it going. I'm just glad I'm not injured again."

A three-time runnerup at the sectionals, Sanders finally captured that elusive Section VI title last weekend to gain a spot in the state championships, as he didn't give up a point in scoring three decision wins.

"I'm kind of nervous but I'm just going to go out and wrestle the way I have all year. I'm going to do what got me here. I want to go out in that first match and establish myself and get the nerves over," said Sanders, who is Albion's career win leader at 176-21. A five-time Niagara-Orleans League and three-time Section VI Class AAA champion he is 38-0 on the season.

"Mike is going in focused," said Albion coach Keith Piccirilli. "Making the states has been a goal of his for a long, long time and he's been close too many times before. He's got plenty of experience and if he's on he can wrestle with anybody."

Crane, who has had a breakthrough senior season winning N-O, Class AA and Section VI titles for the first time, brings a 33-5 record into the state competition.

"It's my first time and I hope I do well," said Crane who had an exciting quest for his sectional championship winning his quarterfinal match in overtime and then rallying for two



Mike Wertman/The Journal-Register

Orleans County will be sending a sizeable contingent of six wrestlers to the state championships at the University at Buffalo this weekend. In front are Torry Tooley and Donald Williams from Kendall. In back are Mike Sanders from Albion, Justine Hartway and Mike Crane from Medina and Andrew Grillo from Holley.

third period takedowns to win the title bout 6-4. "It feels great to be going. My main thing is to stay focused."

"The key for Mike and Justin

is to keep wrestling the way they have been and to believe in themselves," said Medina assistant coach Eric Gross. "It's a great opportunity for them

and they are peaking at the right time."

Grillo likewise broke through to claim a Section V title and a berth in the state

meet after finishing second in the sectional competition last year.

"I've wrestled hard all year and put in a lot of hard work that will pay off," said Grillo who is also a veteran of several years of national level tournament competition.

"I've done well at the nationals and I don't doubt myself one bit," said Grillo, who is 39-0 on the season and has a five-year varsity record to 183-11.

"We're looking to take it one match at a time," said John Grillo, Andrew's coach and father. "The first match is a huge one. It's important to do well in that and get on a roll. I hope he wrestles to win and really opens up. It's just an unbelievable feeling a coach to have a kid going to the states and even more special as a father."

Tooley brings a near perfect 35-1 season record into his first state competition.

"I'm excited to go," said Tooley. "I'm looking to go out and score that first takedown in the opening match which will give me a little extra edge."

"The first match is important," said Sauberan. "We need to stay on our feet and off the mat and we need to be offensive."

Wrestling is scheduled to begin at 11 a.m. Friday with the quarterfinals at 2:30 p.m. Action continues Saturday with the semifinals at 9 a.m. and the finals at 5 p.m.