

She grasped for job

Mom coaches school's wrestling team

By TED ROSEN

D&C Staff Writer



When Cora Morehouse, 43, walked into her first draw for officials, the other coaches in her wrestling league looked up and stared, but no one said a word to her.

A discussion about the upcoming season was started and one of the coaches brought up the precarious status of the Savona Central School's wrestling program.

"I hear Savona's out," he said.

"No — Savona's in," said Mrs. Morehouse.

The men turned to look at her.

"But you're not the coach," they said.

"Yes I am," Mrs. Morehouse replied.

Mrs. Morehouse, a third-grade teacher, is the varsity wrestling coach at Savona Central School, located 10 miles southeast of Bath in Steuben County. She is the first woman to have the job in New York state.

Mrs. Morehouse was a high school athlete,

playing on the softball and track teams. But girls' sports were played primarily as intramurals then.

"I would certainly have loved to have the opportunity the girls have nowadays," she said.

And when the opportunity to get involved in sports presented itself, Mrs. Morehouse readily followed her son, Clark, into wrestling.

"My son wrestled at Savona and he got me interested in the sport," she said. "Our program was nearly dropped a year ago, and they couldn't find a coach to take over a shortened program."

Mrs. Morehouse was named coach before the 1979-80 season.

"No one else was interested in the position," said Savona Athletic Director Tom DiMurro. "She's doing a good job."

Savona's record last season was a creditable 3-1-4. But this season has been a rebuilding one;

Turn to COACH, Page 3A



Cora Morehouse took challenge.
... her son got her interested in wrestling

From Page 1A

five seniors graduated from last year's squad, including Clark Morehouse. Mrs. Morehouse has one junior and eight sophomores, and Savona is 0-6 in the Steuben County D League.

"The funniest moment was the first draw last year," said Mrs. Morehouse. "After that initial shock I've been very well accepted by coaches and officials. They've been very kind and helpful. Spectators are more shocked to see me than the participants in a match."

"Of course," she added, "I take a lot of teasing about it."

Mrs. Morehouse feels that skills in a sport aren't necessary to coach it, and that there's more involved in coaching a sport than teaching skills.

"There are other things to look at such as conditioning and teaching sportsmanship," she said.

To bolster her knowledge of the sport, Mrs. Morehouse stalks area wrestling meets and scouts the competition.

"I watch a lot," she said. "I go to meets as often as I can. I think you learn a lot by watching. I've read about the sport, too, but I learn a lot more by sitting on the edge of the mat, watching."

Another responsibility is the locker room.

"It's the head coach's job to check the locker room," Mrs. Morehouse said. "I go in after everybody's through showering and dressing — when the last person is out. I've never had any problems."

"That fact that they know I'm going to check (for water splashed around and for towels strewn about) makes them more careful," she added.

Unlike male coaches, Mrs. Morehouse does not work with her wrestlers on holds. An assistant coach, Gary Peterson, works with the team for three practices a week. He also works with boys eight to 14 years old in a club. Peterson's son, Stephen, is a seventh grader and team manager.

"I have wrestlers who knew the sport," Mrs. Morehouse said. "They're always sharing their skills with somebody."

"Women could probably work with their wrestlers on holds," she said. "They're are very capa-

ble of doing that. They take up martial arts."

Her rapport with the team is good, said James Johnson, the team's only junior and one of two captains.

"Mrs. Morehouse takes notes during the matches and goes over them during the next practice," said Johnson. "She gets excited during the matches, really gets into it. She helps us a lot, especially with conditioning and calisthenics."

"Male coaches make me work a little harder," said Johnson, who also competes in cross country and track. "Mrs. Morehouse works us pretty hard, but slacks off if she sees us tiring."

Last season was particularly exciting and touching for Mrs. Morehouse. It was her first year of coaching, and her son was on the team.

"It was an experience," she said. "A lot of things happened — good and bad. I never lost touch with the team and that taught me a lesson."

"Wrestling is an individual sport," she continued. "You score points for your team, but each individual can win if the team doesn't. It's not

like basketball, baseball or soccer, where only the team wins or loses.

"Each individual becomes important," Mrs. Morehouse said. "It's possible to have a losing team, but produce a Section 5 champion. It makes it worthwhile if you have an outstanding wrestler."

"And wrestlers are very special people," Mrs. Morehouse continued. "They don't always look at wins and losses."

A case in point was Clark Morehouse. He lost 17 of 18 matches as a sophomore.

"That one win made him want to wrestle the next year," Mrs. Morehouse said. "He did and he won the team trophy for being the most improved wrestler."

"It's what each individual develops into," she added.

"Coaches are very close to the athlete, no matter what the sport is," she said. "I enjoy teaching, but it's not the same."