



Wagner’s Alex Kocer Eyes Fifth State Title

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WAGNER — Try as he might, Alex Kocer has been unable to avoid the state spotlight for his accolades on the wrestling mat. It’s just not possible when you’ve put together the kind of career the Wagner senior has assembled.

Four individual state titles. Three team championships. But now, Kocer is about to feel the spotlight burn even brighter as he begins his senior year with a chance to win his fifth straight state title — and in the process, join rare company.

“I’ve thought about it, sure,” he said before a pre-season practice outside Wagner’s red-clad wrestling room. “It’s a cool thought.

“It doesn’t always happen, because every year has been tougher.”

Kocer has won championships at 103 pounds (2008), 119 (2009), 130 (2010) and 152 last season as a junior.

Only four other South Dakota wrestlers have won five straight state titles. Kirk Wallman of Freeman (1984-89) and Logan Storley of Webster Area (2006-11) both won six straight — two of the three in U.S. history to accomplish that feat.

Lincoln McIlravy of Philip (1988-92) and Hannon Hisek of Bon Homme (1994-98) each captured five straight titles.

Put another way, Kocer could join exclusive company with a strong senior season.

“He doesn’t ever bring it up, but just by the things he does, I think he feels it a little bit,” said Wagner first-year coach Chas Welch, who pointed to Kocer’s increased summer workout habits as proof.

“The crazy thing is, he’s about the most carefree kid you can ever meet.”

Even with all his success, Kocer has, for the most part, done so quietly, without much hoopla.

When the Red Raiders won

Championship Effort X 4

Wagner’s Alex Kocer will try to become just the fifth South Dakota prep wrestler to win five state championships during his career. Last February, he became the 16th wrestler in S.D. to win as many as four.

Six-Time Champions

Kirk Wallman, Freeman (1984-89)98-112-126-132-138-152
Logan Storley, Webster (2006-11)103-119-130-152-171-171

Five-Time Champions

Lincoln McIlravy, Philip (1988-92)98-112-125-152-152
Hannon Hisek, Bon Homme (1994-98)112-119-125-135-135

Four-Time Champions

Dan Bonte, Garretson (2001, 2003-05)103-119-135-140
Rick Jensen, Watertown (1971-74)98-105-119-132
Alex Kocer, Wagner (2008-11)103-119-130-152
Seth Lange, Sturgis (2007-10)103-119-125-130
David Rowe (1983-86)112-119-132-132
Travis Slaba, Wagner (1992-95)103-119-119-125

Nick Smith, Yankton (2001-04)103-119-119-125
Chad Uhlig, Sully Buttes (1996-99)103-119-119-125
Cory Wallman, Marion-Freeman (92-95)135-145-152-152
Gary Wallman, Miller (1961-64)95-112-127-133
Troy Wallman, Freeman (1985-88)98-105-119-126
Dustin Walraven, Huron (2004-08)112-130-135-135

their three consecutive team titles from 2008-10, the bulk of the focus was on Wagner three-time state champion Robert Kokesh — now at Nebraska.

Now, just like last season, Kocer is the undisputed leader. Is he ready for that role?

“I hope the guys see me like that,” he said. “I’m an easy-going guy, but we like to push each other. That’s what the seniors before me did to us younger guys.”

Kocer is not alone when it comes to Wagner wrestlers poised for strong seasons. Senior Derek Dickerson is the returning Class B champion at 160 pounds, while David Kocer (So.), Tyler Dion (Jr.), Sage Zephier (Jr.), Cuka Soukup (Jr.) and Brady Custin (Sr.) all competed at the state tournament a year ago.

The attitude showcased by Kocer is not unlike that of his teammates, Welch said.

“He’s very good about pushing the younger kids and pushing the team in the right direction,” said the 29-year-old former wrestler at Northern State. “He never wants the spotlight on him.

“That’s the whole program in Wagner; everyone has the same mindset.”

If the Red Raiders need motivation, they need only to look at their schedule this season. Wagner will compete in tournaments at Kimball, Winner-Gregory,

Howard, Sioux Falls Lincoln and Wyoming.

All the while, Kocer will be there, giving guidance to his younger teammates.

“The kids definitely look up to him. It’s nice to have someone who can demonstrate what’s going on or what the coach is explaining,” Welch said. “He leads by example.

“He’s done things people can’t get away with, but for him, it looks natural.”

As far as his post-high school plans, Kocer said he hasn’t decided yet on a college.

“I’m pretty indecisive,” he said, with a grin. “I’ve had a lot of schools send letters and stuff, but I’m not sure yet.

“I just want to have a good finish to high school first.”

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Wagner HS			
Red Raiders Boys’ Basketball			
Date	Opponent	Location	Time
12/10	Avon	Wagner	6:30 p.m.
12/17	Dakota Christian	Corsica	5 p.m.
12/30	Parkston Classic	Parkston	TBA
1/3	Plankinton	Plankinton	6:30 p.m.
1/6	Bon Homme	Tyndall	6:15 p.m.
1/7	Corsica/Stickney	Corsica	6:30 p.m.
1/10	South Central	Wagner	6:30 p.m.
1/12	Parkston	Wagner	5 p.m.
1/19	Winner	Winner	6:30 p.m.
1/23	Tripp-Delmont/Armour	Wagner	6:30 p.m.
1/26	Scotland	Wagner	6:30 p.m.
1/27	Hartington Cedar Catholic	Hartington, Neb	6:30 p.m.
1/31	O'Neill	O'Neill, Neb.	6:30 p.m.
2/3	Andes Central	Wagner	6:30 p.m.
2/4	McCook Central/Montrose	Salem	4:15 p.m.
2/10	Chamberlain	Chamberlain	5 p.m.
2/11	DWU Classic	Mitchell	TBA
2/14	Vermillion	Wagner	8 p.m.
2/17	Platte-Geddes	Wagner	6:30 p.m.
2/24	Gregory	Gregory	6:30 p.m.
Red Raiders Girls’ Basketball			
Date	Opponent	Location	Time
12/6	Winner	Wagner	6:30 p.m.
12/10	Lennox	Wagner	5 p.m.
12/12	Tripp-Delmont/Armour	Wagner	6:30 p.m.
12/16	West Central	Wagner	6:30 p.m.
12/17	Dakota Christian	Corsica	5 p.m.
12/29	Parkston Classic	Parkston	TBA
1/3	Hanson	Alexandria	6:30 p.m.
1/5	Bon Homme	Wagner	6:30 p.m.
1/7	Corsica/Stickney	Corsica	6:30 p.m.
1/10	Gregory	Gregory	6:30 p.m.
1/12	Parkston	Wagner	5 p.m.
1/14	Hanson Classic	Mitchell	TBA
1/20	Avon	Wagner	6:30 p.m.
1/27	Scotland	Scotland	6:30 p.m.
1/31	O'Neill	O'Neill, Neb.	5 p.m.
2/2	Andes Central	Lake Andes	6:30 p.m.
2/4	McCook Central/Montrose	Salem	4:15 p.m.
2/10	Chamberlain	Chamberlain	5 p.m.
2/14	Vermillion	Wagner	5 p.m.
2/16	Platte-Geddes	Platte	5 p.m.
Red Raiders Wrestling			
Date	Opponent	Location	Time
12/1	Bon Homme	Wagner	6:30 p.m.
12/3	Kimball Tournament	Kimball	9:30 a.m.
12/8 p.m.	Winner/Gregory Tournament		Wagner6
12/10	Howard Tournament	Howard	10 a.m.
12/13	Parkston	Wagner	6:30 p.m.
12/16-17	Wyoming Tournament	Gillette, Wyo.	TBA
12/29-30	Sioux Falls Lincoln Tourn.	Sioux Falls	11/10 a.m.
1/7	SESD Conference Tourn.	Tyndall	10 a.m.
1/14	Mitchell Tournament	Mitchell	11 a.m.
1/17	Kimball/Lyman Triangular	Kimball	5:30 p.m.
1/24	Andes Central	Lake Andes	6:30 p.m.
1/28	Wagner Tournament	Wagner	10 a.m.
2/2	Scotland/EPJ/Beresford Quad.	Scotland	5 p.m.
Red Raiders Gymnastics			
Date	Opponent	Location	Time
12/10	Wagner Tournament	Wagner	Noon
12/29	Vermillion Tournament	Vermillion	11:30 a.m.
1/6	Chamberlain Quadrangular	Chamberlain	6:15 p.m.
1/7	Stanley County Meet	Ft. Pierre	Noon
1/9	Mitchell/S.F. Roosevelt Tri.	Wagner	6:30 p.m.
1/14	Madison Tournament	Madison	Noon
1/23	Chamberlain/Kimball Tri.	Chamberlain	6:15 p.m.
1/30	Vermillion/West Central Tri.	Vermillion	6:30 p.m.