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Killed us in both. We had "Giving up bonus points Jamie Gibbs said. and junior Brandon Nash, senior Erik Stancil of wins from junior Mike Creek, N.C. held Jan. 21 at Buies at the Campbell Duels.

By Matt Smith

Braves' freshman Kieyon Nash takes down a wrestler at the Campbell Duels. The Braves lost both matches at the duels.

Braves falter at Campbell Duels

The Black and Gold wrestling team faced off against a pair of Division I squads, falling to both Campbell and The Citadel in the Campbell Duels held Jan. 21 at Buies Creek, N.C.

The team earned a pair of wins from junior Mike Nash, senior Erik Stancil and junior Brandon Bradbury, but dropped a 14-26 decision to The Citadel before falling 15-25 to the host Campbell Camels.

"We wrestled ok against Campbell and The Citadel," head coach Jamie Gibbs said. "Giving up bonus points killed us in both. We had some guys that stepped up and wrestled tough, though. Mike Nash, Brandon Bradbury, Erik Stancil, Kieyon Nash all wrestled well for us."

In the team’s match against The Citadel, the Braves fell down 0-9 to start the match before coming back to take a 16-12 lead.

The 16 team points would be the last for the Braves as the Bulldogs’ Derek Sickle and Keith Koizel both posted pins for the Bulldogs in their final two matches of the day to give the Citadel the 24-16 victory.

Nash, Bradbury, Stancil, juniors Bryan Miller and Tommy Allen and freshman Keyon Nash all posted victories on the day, with Miller leading the way with an 11-2 major decision over the Bulldogs’ David Ivanshchenko. In their match against the host Campbell Camels, the Braves again fell into an early hole, dropping its first three individual matches to the Camels.

The Braves’ Ryan Ham, Kyle Higgins and Parker Burns fell to a decision, major decision and a pin fall to put the Braves down in the match’s early going.

"Doon 13-0, the Braves again rallied back as they did against The Citadel, getting wins again from Stancil, M. Nash and K. Nash to cut Campbell’s lead down to one at 13-12," Mike Nash earned the Braves’ lone pin fall against the Camels, taking down Campbell’s Richie Apolinare at the 6-0 mark in the 133-pound match.

But as in the earlier contest, the Camels rebounded by winning three of their next four matches, taking two decisions and a pin in the process to battle back 12 points to put the match out of reach for the Braves.

"Bradley was the Braves only victory in the final four matches, as the Braves won the 13-6 decision over the Camels. The Camels held on for the 25-15 victory, earning the team’s second lead down to one at 13-12,"

Nash snapped a personal winning streak by 6-0 decision taking a 6-0 decision in the opening match.

In their next bout, the Braves faced off against the 133-pound match to take the victory.

The lone win for the Braves in their final two matches against Mercyhurst was a 13-6 decision from Allen.

The Braves were forced to face the No. 2 nationally ranked wrestlers in the country, a 274-pound weight class, as the Black and Gold’s Mike Hall faced off against the Lakers’ Josh Shields. The Shields took the match from Hall 6-0, but had to earn every point he got from the Braves’ red- shir t-jacket.

The Black and Gold went on to win this match 18-13, with Miller leading the way with a 9-5 decision in the 162-pound match to take the victory.

Stancil took the 174-pound match with a 12-7 decision, taking a 6-0 decision in the opening match.

Six of their last eight matches to take the victory.

The Black and Gold went on to win three of their first five contests with decisions by Nash and Fix, but the team soon found themselves in a 1-9 hole after the Yellow Jackets’ Ed Ellis and Yaakov Bloch posted consecutive decisions.

Though down, the Braves rallied back by posting three consecutive victories to take the 18-13 decision.

Allen, freshman Connor Pryor and senior Erik Stancil posted the three straight wins in the 133-pound match, snapping the team’s three recent match losing skid.

Second day action continued from 1B three finishes, a complete turnaround from the 2007 season.

The Braves are just two matches away from defending their conference title this season, but the two believe the team is coming all right. "We’re coming along well," Nash said. "Every match we have left is a hard fight.

Stancil agrees, saying that the team bought into Gibbs’ training methods which have made them successful.

"This team has the most talent I’ve ever coached," Gibbs said. "I came to UNCP in 2005."

"All team leaders have a lot of talented fresh- men…the team as a whole has bought into Coach Gibbs training method: ‘Get fired first and then compete. We live by that.”

There is no doubt the team is performing well this season and with the leadership roles both Stancil and Nash have taken over this year, the team was poised for great success this year and beyond.

"With the end of the season approaching, Gibbs, Nash and Stancil all have set a high mark for the team to reach.

Clos ing it out

With the season coming to an end, the two leaders have high hopes for the Black and Gold Squad.

"All team leaders have high goals for this season," Nash said. "We want nothing less than All-American status. We want to go out and have a good season, not just file the season away.

This year we want to file the season away. We want to take it to the next level."

"I think the team is very special to me and our program," Nash said. "We talk a lot about being a complete wrestler, not just in sport but socially and academically. These guys work hard to improve individually and collectively."

No one person is an island and no one individual can carry the team by himself. Luckily for Coach Gibbs and the Braves’ wrestling squad, they have a duo to lift the team to new heights.

A duo that leads the right way, the Braves’ answer.