

## Huskies? wrestlers headed to Ontario championship



By Bill Kilpatrick

Three wrestlers from North Hastings High School are headed to Stoney Creek, near Hamilton, for the Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations wrestling championships which are being held from March 5-6. Sixteen-year-old Jaxsyn Gillis, is heading to the Ontario wrestling championships for his second year, but this year he is hoping for a top three finish. Jaxsyn has been having a great year so far, but it hasn't been without its setbacks either. In his first tournament held in December at Kenner Secondary School in Peterborough, he wrestled in two weight classes, the 77 kilogram and the 83 kilogram, and won them both while only having one point scored on him. However, at the provincial tournament on Feb. 3 in Markham he ended up finishing fifth, which for him was a personal disappointment, "I wasn't really satisfied with my performance," he told Bancroft This Week, "I could have done better." At the Central Ontario Secondary School Association qualifier, he did just that, by winning gold in the 83 kilogram weight class without getting a point scored on him. Jaxsyn now faces 32 of the best wrestlers in Ontario and he is not planning to have a finish like the provincials, "I'm feeling good and looking forward to it," he said, "I'm ready to go top three at OFSSA." Jaxsyn's younger brother Parker Gillis is heading to OFSSA for the first time wrestling in the 64 kilogram class, but he almost didn't make it. Parker told Bancroft This Week that he lost his first match at the Central Ontario qualifier and things were not looking good, but he managed to battle his way back and won the next four matches straight to land in third place, but only the top two get to go to OFSSA. However, as Lyle Collins, one of Parker's coaches explained, "If you haven't wrestled the guy who lost the gold medal match, the third place can challenge him for his spot," and that's exactly what Parker did. "I was worried," explained Parker, "because the guy I beat in the finals beat the kid who beat me first. I had nothing to lose going into it." Parker then decisively won the match 13-1 allowing him to go to OFSSA. While he technically beat the silver medal winner and took his spot at OFSSA, he still technically came in third at the Central Ontario qualifier, but for him, he explained, it will always be a silver medal finish. "I'm just happy I made it," said Parker, "My goal was to make it to OFSSA and I'm just going to try and learn as much as I can from my matches." Fifteen-year-old Odin Worsley is also heading to OFSSA for a second time wrestling in the 76.5 kilogram weight class. Last year Odin won silver at the Central Ontario qualifier, and went 1-2 at OFSSA, but this year he won gold and is hoping for a better finish at OFSSA. Having been at OFSSA once already, Odin knows the competition will be stiff, and says that he's "feeling fine," heading into the tournament. Collins explained that you get out of wrestling what you put into it adding that these three have worked hard to get where they're at. Collins coaches with Sean Roulston, whom Collins is grateful to have assisting the students. "He's an awesome wrestler," said Collins, "He won OFSSA, so having him is a great plus." Collins and Roulston have one message for their students, "You come to practice, listen to what we tell you, and work hard we'll get you as far as you want to go." Collins said that Jaxsyn was working with Roulston all summer and his success is a direct result of his dedication and work ethic, it also explains why multiple times during the interview Jaxsyn gave shout outs to Roulston. To try and encourage more students to participate Collins, Roulston and Dr. Eric Blanchard are looking to run a wrestling clinic before the start of the season with the goal

of exposing more people to the sport, "They have no concept of what the sport is," said Collins adding that most people are only exposed to it once every four years at the Olympics. The hope is to increase interest in the sport as the number of wrestlers has been diminishing over the years. At its peak the wrestling club had 25-30 kids, but this year 10 kids tried out and by the end of the season there were only six left. Collins is hoping that he will get to see one of the male competitors place in the top three before he quits coaching, "I have two girls get bronze," he said, "but I've never had a guy finish higher than the top six," but who knows, maybe this year will be the year?