

Last week, the wrestling mats at [Lehigh University](#) were filled with a veritable Who's Who of wrestling in the United States.

[PICTURE OF GAVIN]

Keith Gavin, an [NCAA](#) champion and two-time NCAA finalist for the University of Pittsburgh, was on the mats. A trimmed-down Pat Cummins, an NCAA runner-up at heavyweight at Penn State, was there, as was Mike Poeta, a three-time All-American and two-time NCAA finalist from the [University of Illinois](#).

Those three, along with five other big names, wrestle for the Lehigh Valley Athletic Club, a wrestling club co-founded by former Lehigh coach Greg Strobel to provide teaching and training opportunities for all wrestlers while helping top wrestlers reach the elite level for world championship and Olympic competition. Kerry McCoy was a two-time Olympian for LVAC.

Gavin, Cummins and Poeta are members of the LVAC team that competes in major national and international tournaments. Gavin is the only one who has moved to Bethlehem, but the entire group, along with a group of high-level training partners, gathered at Lehigh University last week to conduct a training camp for the [U.S. Open](#), which is April 21-24 at Wolstein Center on the campus of Cleveland State University.

"The club is growing about as fast as we can handle it," said LVAC head coach Jason Kutz, a volunteer assistant at Lehigh and a former EIWA champion for Lehigh, as well as a former head coach at [East Stroudsburg University](#).

"Our mission, the point I want to make, is that we're trying to promote the sport of wrestling from junior high on up," he said. "The unique thing about the Lehigh Valley is that there are so many different wrestling clubs here, and a lot of kids are loyal to their high school club.

"I'm looking to get the best guys out of every club to meet at our central location and get different looks and different feels to make Lehigh Valley wrestling even better. If the Lehigh Valley gets better, Pennsylvania gets better, and wrestling gets better. We want to give these young athletes the tools they need to be successful at the highest level."

Kutz, in his third year as the club's head coach, runs a series of fall, winter and spring clinics. The spring clinics begin tonight and meet every Wednesday through June 6, training in freestyle wrestling in the Lehigh University wrestling room.

"Keith Gavin will help me run clinics, along with Pat Cummins and the Lehigh staff," Kutz said.

The clinicians include sponsored athlete Matt Valenti, a two-time NCAA champion from the [University of Pennsylvania](#) who now is an assistant coach at Penn, former Penn State wrestler Cary Kolat, Lehigh three-time All-American and two-time NCAA finalist Jon Trengue, and Lehigh two-time All-American Mario Stuart. Both Trengue, from Parkland High School, and Stuart, from Liberty, illustrate the heights that local wrestlers can reach through proper training.

LVAC also has a competition team training for world championship events at the elite level. It includes former Penn State All-American Mark McKnight at 55 kilograms, Valenti and ESU head coach Joey Rivera at 60 kilos, Corey Jantzen, who took a year off from Harvard to hone his freestyle skills, at 66, Poeta at 74, Gavin at 84, Cummins at 96 and four-time Division III All-American Blake Gillis at heavyweight.

Some of the top visiting wrestlers for the U.S. Open training camp included former Pitt wrestlers Drew Headlee, now an assistant coach at Waynesburg University, and Carl Fronhofer, now an assistant at Bloomsburg University, and Brandon Sinnott, a former All-American at Central Michigan.

For information on LVAC, see its Web site at <http://www.lvacwrestling.com> .

gary.blockus@mcall.com

610-820-6782

Copyright © 2010, [The Morning Call](#)