

LVAC Fall Intensive Training Camp, at Lehigh U, Sept. 7-11, 2009

Bethlehem, PA: By all accounts, the Fall Intensive Training Camp hosted by the Lehigh Valley Athletic Club in Lehigh's Taylor Gym proved highly successful for helping post-graduate freestyle wrestlers pursue and realize their World and Olympic aspirations. According to Lehigh Assistant, **John Hughes**, "they enjoyed highly personalized attention and their technical instruction and advice received paralleled and, in some cases, superseded their Olympic Training Center Camp experiences."

It was another step taken toward establishing the LVAC as a Center for Excellence in all styles of wrestling for the various age groups. The post-grads arrived from all over the USA, including Colorado, Illinois, West Virginia, Philadelphia and East Stroudsburg, PA. They were challenged by the LVAC's head coach and Camp organizer, former World Military Champion, **Jason Kutz** and other coaching mentors including former NCAA champions **Pat Santoro** and Hughes, as well as two-time All-American, **Brad Dillon**.

The athletes' two-a-day (90-minute each) workout regimen featured a mixture of drilling, plyometric weight training, situational and live wrestling sessions, and strategic and technical advice over the 5-day period. Added Hughes: "It was a beneficial, widely embraced format and others will eventually be encouraged to attend future LVAC training opportunities. Pat Santoro's emerging Club concept is providing a platform from which elite athletes can springboard into the 2012 Olympic Trials."

After the camp ended, Kutz later added: "We heard from **Mike Poeta** who sent his appreciation for the camp: "I'd love to represent the Lehigh Valley Athletic Club in competitionI feel that you can give me a great opportunity out there to reach my goals and I want to be a part of it."

Poeta (163) a Volunteer Coach at Illinois (NCAA 3, 2, 2 at 157 for the Illini in '07-09) was a 2-time Big Ten champion and 2-time Midlands first who owns his school's 2nd-best career win/loss pct (.882).

Poeta at right, in blue, wrestling Moza Fay at 2009 Northern Plains Jr/Sr Reg. Championships;
Photo by LVAC Photog, Brooke Zumas; **more pics below**



The balance of the participants included LVAC assistant coach **Keith Gavin** (NCAA 2,1 for Pitt, now 185) and his fellow Club sponsored athlete 132-**Matt Valenti** (Penn Asst Coach and NCAA 5,1,1 for Penn), both of whom placed in National freestyle competition last year; 121-**Mark McKnight** (NCAA 4, PSU); 132-**Joey Rivera**, East Stroudsburg Head Coach (8th in National Open) and 145-Harvard junior-to-be, **Corey Jantzen**, a 2-time Midlands place winner in high school and 2009 EIWA 2nd at 141, who is spending the 2009-10 year at the Olympic Training Center.

Eleven members of the Lehigh University team joined in the "classroom" experience, 133-**Matt Fisk**; 141-**Seth Ciasulli**; 149-**Kyle Rosser**; 157-**Sean Bilodeau**; 165-**Mike Galante** and **Brandon Hatchett**; 174-**Alex Caruso** and **Robert Hamlin**; 184-**Robert Prigmore** and **Kevin Bailey** and 197-**Joe Kennedy**. Hatchett -- a former 5th-place finisher in Greco at the senior level Sunkist Open -- was caught off-guard by the camp schedule, chiming in with: "Hey, how come I wasn't invited!?" before a reminder that the sessions were optional and his academic classes came first.

Bilodeau and Jantzen (hosted by Alex Caruso) have known each other since their workouts began at age 13-14 at Harvard University, where in 2004 Corey's older brother, Jesse, became the

Crimson's first NCAA champion since 1939 (now retired from wrestling and working in Colorado). Sean, ironically enough, is a native of Harvard, MA, an hour W. of Cambridge. Galante enjoyed hosting Poeta at his campus residence, while the two avid freestylers battled on the mats. The Lehigh Mike was equally enthused about the camp (alleged to be in bed early every night) – and began lobbying for his own post-grad LVAC options.

Poeta is also a long-time friend of Hughes; McKnight (a WVU Club coach) drove seven hours to stay over with fellow Pennsylvanian, Gavin; the two also friends since HS. Valenti and Rivera commuted from both the North and South. The latter was Kutz's assistant coach at ESU before succeeding him in 2006-07. Like Valenti, Joey enjoys the chance to train with, and learn from, Kutz's decade of high level freestyle experience, much of it at the same weight class (Jason retired from formal competition in April '08).

Next camp in the works ? Invitations will be extended soon, with a likely desirable training sequence in December leading into the Midlands Championships (All photos by Brooke Zumaz)



Keith Gavin (left) joined LVAC staff on 7/1/09 after moving from the U. of Pittsburgh



Matt Valenti wrestled for the LVAC at the 2009 National Open and World Team Trials



Nice launch by LVAC coach Kutz during his competition days



Former 2x NCAA 2nd Mike Poeta (right) will suit up for the LVAC beginning in Fall '09