

# Athletic department pins women's wrestling

By Tessa Castor  
Staff reporter

Future Builder women will have a new athletic opportunity thanks to the approval of women's wrestling, a decision announced in mid-November.

The Southwestern College Board of Trustees approved the addition of a women's wrestling program, with the inaugural season slated for 2018-2019. The college has now launched a search for a coach to build the team.

In the late 1990s, the University of Minnesota-Morris began the first collegiate varsity women's wrestling team. Over the past two decades, dozens of collegiate wrestling programs for women began, and Southwestern College will join that list in the fall of 2018.

Scott Nuss, sports information director/assistant athletic director, said that the school is currently looking for a head coach. Once a head coach is found, recruitment will begin, likely in the spring.

"We hope to have a team of 20 to 25 women," said Nuss. "More is better, obviously. We hope to be up and running at 100 percent as soon as we can."

"I definitely want to see a program come in and expect to be competitive right away," said Matt Shelton, director of athletics.

Nuss said that the team, likely filled by women from Oklahoma, Texas and Kansas, will practice at Winfield High School and compete in Stewart Field House, though details have not yet been finalized.

"It's an exciting sport regionally and this provides us a unique opportunity to offer a sport to current and future Builders that we feel like we're getting in on the ground level on," said Shelton.

High school and club wrestling for girls has grown rapidly in the past decade. Initially in Texas, New Mexico and California, now the sport is experiencing considerable growth throughout the country. Institutions of higher education are beginning to respond to the emerging sport by offering programs for student athletes to continue at a collegiate level.

The Lady Builder wrestling program is set to compete in its inaugural season as a member of the Kansas Collegiate Athletic Conference among other familiar foes, Ottawa and Saint Mary, beginning in October of 2018. A typical season is comprised of 13 duals along with postseason play culminating in early February with the Women's Collegiate Wrestling Association Championships.

"It will provide an exciting demographic of student athletes we don't currently have, continuing Southwestern's already rich tradition of diversity. It will help continue enrollment growth as the college strengthens itself in that area," said Shelton. "There are always risks in everything you do, but we feel very confident that women's wrestling is the right sport at the right time for Southwestern."

With 40 programs offered in the United States, women's wrestling has the potential to double that figure in the coming years.

The process of forming a team, equipped with a qualified coaching staff is a process that inevitably take time. The athletic department will not hesitate to seek coach candidates from other potential regions.

"We're going national with it," said Nuss. "Our goal is to find the absolute best candidate we can find to make this a successful program."

Shelton said, "We want to have somebody here and hired by the middle or end of February. That is when the peak of recruiting starts. We will definitely have an assistant coach at some point in time, but a big piece of that will be where we are at in terms of roster size the first year."

For now, the Builder women's wrestling program is in its infant stages of development. They have less than a year to bring this vision into fruition.

"You can come here and be just a women's wrestler," said Shelton. "It's strictly your show."

The addition of women's wrestling at Southwestern, Nuss said, is a "bold idea," and the Builder athletic department hopes to be a "trailblazer" for the sport.

"Women's wrestling is hot right now," said Nuss. "We're kind of hoping to make a move that's ahead of the market. The whole thing is kind of a risk, but it's worth it."

Southwestern's program will be the fourth in the school's athletic conference. It will function on a 10-dual schedule as well as multiple tournaments. Nuss said that the school may eventually consider the addition of male's wrestling.

Expenses for adding the sport at Southwestern will be low, said Nuss. It "is the kind of sport that pays for itself." Nuss said that women's wrestling will help with enrollment and bring a different demographic to the school.

"There's far more benefits than risks," said Nuss. "Choosing this sport shows that we are giving our students every op-

portunity possible. Also, it shows that we are not afraid to think outside of the box. It's a little bit of a bold idea, but this sport is increasing in numbers."

Shelton said that the school considered a few other women's sports along with wrestling, including lacrosse, swimming and diving and bowling. However, Shelton said that women's wrestling was the right decision.

Shelton said, "Between the data of the high school women's wrestlers versus what's offered collegiately and the increase in the conference, all those things led to our decision for women's wrestling."

"I think in changing times it's a good fit," said Shelton. "It was neat for us to be early in the market for women's wrestling."

The KCAC and the Mid-South Conference, based in Kentucky, are the first two conferences to offer women's wrestling in the NAIA. Southwestern will be 40th intercollegiate varsity women's program in the country.

Shelton said that he believes that women's wrestling is becoming so widespread because of its uniqueness. He said that being a part of the sport's implementation is exciting, allowing a way to "leave a legacy."

"It's fun to build things from scratch," said Shelton. "We have had some interesting statistics since we made the decision to add women's wrestling. It has been the most-often-viewed story ever on our athletics website by almost twice as many hits. The second most-viewed story had 6,500 hits, and the women's wrestling story has over 14,000 already. It has been wildly popular."

When it comes to building women's wrestling in the KCAC, Carl Murphree, women's wrestling sport chair for the KCAC, said that he sees "nothing but growth," as it allows women another outlet in which they can be successful. Murphree said that Southwestern's addition of women's wrestling will allow a currently unrepresented area of Kansas to be represented, along with drawing women from Texas and Oklahoma.

"I think that Kansas is a natural home for women's wrestling," said Murphree. "I just hope that girls can find Southwestern as a good fit for them individually and that wrestling can be a part of that."

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## Wrestling scoring and terms

Provided by wvmat.com

A wrestling match consists of three one minute to two minute periods in which the goal of each wrestler is to put his or her opponent on their back.

### Five ways to score points in a match:

1. **Takedown** (two points) – Taking an opponent down to the mat and controlling him/her
2. **Escape** (one point) – Getting to a neutral position after being controlled by an opponent
3. **Reversal** (two points) – Gaining control of an opponent after being controlled by him/her
4. **Near fall** (two or three points) – Nearly getting an opponent pinned for two to five seconds
5. **Penalty points** (one or two points) – Gained if an opponent has an illegal hold; commits technical violations such as "fleeing the mat," grabbing clothing, the mat or headgear and locked hands; uses unnecessary roughness or unsportsmanlike conduct; flagrant misconduct; stalling and incorrect starting position or false start.

### Other terms:

**Pin/fall** – Putting an opponent on his/her back with any part of both shoulders or both shoulder blades of the opponent in contact with the mat for two seconds. A pin results in the end of the match.

**Technical fall** – Getting ahead of an opponent by 15 points. A technical fall results in the end of the match.

**Decision** – Winning the match by fewer than eight points without a pin

**Major decision** – Winning the match by 8 to 14 points without a pin

**Sudden victory/death** – In the result of a tie at the end of the third period, an overtime tie-breaker in which the first person to score in one minute is declared the winner