

CLEVELAND STATE VIKINGS ATHLETICS

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The Viking Report. . .

A Look At What Is Happening In Cleveland State Athletics

Basketball Schedule Heats Up At Home. . .

First Place Men's Basketball Heads To Wisconsin For Two Key Contests

As the temperature drops in northeast Ohio, the competition heats up this week as both basketball teams continue their quests towards Horizon League titles and the wrestling team begins Eastern Wrestling League play.

The men's basketball team will put its perfect 7-0 league mark on the line when the Vikings play road games at Green Bay on Thursday (Jan. 24) and Milwaukee (Jan. 26). CSU (14-5, 7-0) is fresh off wins over 12th-ranked Butler and Valparaiso at home last week.

The women's basketball team (10-7, 4-2), which is in third place in the league standings, one-game behind co-leaders Milwaukee and Green Bay, will play just one contest this week, hosting Youngstown State on Saturday (Jan. 26) beginning at 3:00 p.m. in the Wolstein Center.

The wrestling team begins its six-game EWL league slate by hosting 16th-ranked Pittsburgh on Friday (Jan. 25) beginning at 7:00 p.m. in Woodling Gym.

The men's and women's swimming teams are back in action at home this week when the Vikings host Niagara on Saturday (Jan. 26) beginning at 1:00 p.m. in Busbey Natatorium.

The fencing teams will end a two-month layoff when they travel to University Park, Pa. to take part in the Penn State Duals. Competition begins at 9:00 a.m. on Saturday (Jan. 26).

Both tennis teams will be in action at home at the River Oaks Racquet Club, the men hosting Xavier on Saturday (Jan. 26) at 2:00 p.m. and the women entertaining Toledo on Sunday (Jan. 27) at 2:00 p.m.

Men's Basketball Puts First Place On The Line With Two Games In Wisconsin. . .

Vikings Have Won Six Straight, Play At Green Bay & Milwaukee

After playing five of their first seven league games at home, the men's basketball team will start a four-game road trek with a pair of games in the State of Wisconsin this week. CSU will play at Green Bay on Thursday (Jan. 24) before traveling to Milwaukee on Saturday (Jan. 26). Both games will be played at 8:00 p.m. EST.

The Vikings begin the week with a game-and-a-half lead over second place Butler in the Horizon League standings. CSU has won eight straight league games going back to last season and are 7-0 in league play for only the second time in school history (and first since joining the Horizon League).

Cleveland State took a huge step last week towards receiving a first and second round bye in the upcoming league tournament by sweeping games over 12th-ranked Butler (56-52) and Valparaiso (69-63), the teams that were in second and third place in the standings. The win over Butler snapped a 19-game losing streak against ranked opponents and gave the Vikings only their second win ever against a ranked opponent.

The Schedule Ahead For The Vikings

Jan. 24	Thursday	Men's Basketball at Green Bay	Green Bay, WI	8:00 p.m.
Jan. 25	Friday	Wrestling hosts Pittsburgh	Woodling Gym	7:00 p.m.
Jan. 26	Saturday	Fencing at Penn State Duals	University Park, PA	9:00 a.m.
		Men's Swimming host Niagara	Busbey Natatorium	1:00 p.m.
		Women's Swimming host Niagara	Busbey Natatorium	1:00 p.m.
		Men's Tennis hosts Xavier	River Oaks Racquet Club	2:00 p.m.
		Women's Basketball hosts Youngstown State	Wolstein Center	3:00 p.m.
		Men's Basketball at Milwaukee	Milwaukee, WI	8:00 p.m.
Jan. 27	Sunday	Women's Tennis hosts Toledo	River Oaks Racquet Club	12:00 p.m.

“Last week may have been a big week for our program, but all we really did was hold serve,” head coach Gary Waters said. “You have to win your home games if you want to compete for a league championship.

“In some respects, this week is an even bigger one for us because every win on the road makes you that much better in the league standings. We have four straight road games ahead and if we don’t do well, we will give up all of the advantages that we have gained over the first three weeks,” Waters added.

The Vikings continue to win with defense, leading the Horizon League in field goal defense (.418), rebounding (36.4), rebounding margin (+5.1) and steals (8.2).

Women’s Basketball Hosts Youngstown State. . .

Vikings Put Five-Game Win Streak On The Line

Cleveland State (10-7, 4-2 HL) concludes its brief three-game homestand on Saturday, Jan. 26, when the Vikings host Youngstown State at 3:00 p.m. in the Wolstein Center. The Vikings enter the week tied for third place in the league standings with YSU, one game behind Green Bay and Milwaukee who are tied for first place with 5-1 records.

“I am very proud of this team and how they are coming around,” head coach Kate Peterson Abiad said. “We are going to enjoy the fact that we are making strides as a program. One of the biggest surprises to me this season is how well we are shooting the ball. We shot 37 percent as a team last year and to improve by five percent in a single season is a huge accomplishment.”

With 10 wins this season, the Vikings have already surpassed their win total from last season (8-22) and have reached double-digit wins for the first time since the 2003-04 season. The Vikings have been doing much of their damage at home, posting a 6-2 mark in the Wolstein Center, including five straight wins. It is the first time the Vikings have won five straight at home since the 1999-2000 season.

The Vikings ran their home win streak to five with wins over Detroit (63-41) and Wright State (68-54) last week. Kailey Klein scored a game-high 24 points in Thursday’s (Jan. 17) win over Detroit, while Dominique Butler finished with 20 points, eight rebounds and five steals against the Raiders on Saturday, Jan. 19.

CSU has been making a name for itself with tenacious defense and at the free throw line. The Vikings lead the league in steals (11.0 spg) after making 26 in two games last week. In addition, CSU continues to be the top free throw shooting team in the league and one of the top-10 in the country, hitting .786.

Wrestling Opens EWL Season Against 16th-Ranked Pittsburgh. . .

The Vikings return home this Friday, Jan. 25 to host nationally ranked Pittsburgh in CSU’s first EWL dual matchup of the season. The match will be contested at Woodling Gymnasium at 7:00 p.m. EST.

In their last competition at the Ashland Duals, Cleveland State went 1-2, scoring a victory over Ashland (21-13) but losing to Illinois (37-0) and Northern Illinois (31-6). Freshman Alek Hughes had the best day individually in going 2-1 at 197 pounds. Hughes also recorded two pins, pushing his team-leading season total to eight.

“It was a very tough day,” head coach Jack Effner said, “But we walk away a much tougher team. We didn’t forfeit any of our matches, and we rose to every challenge presented before us.”

Going into this week’s matchup with Pittsburgh, the 16th ranked team in the country according to wrestlingreport.com, the Vikings will look to their experience and to their talented newcomers to help the squad achieve victory. CSU’s Marcus Effner (26th at 165 pounds) and Rashard Goff (24th at 285) are each ranked nationally while freshmen Robbie Michaels (23-4) and Hughes (14-12) have each performed well in their first season at CSU.

The team hopes for the return of a few injured starters, and no absence would be more noticeable than at the 174 pound class if JT Miller is unable to start. Miller sat out the Ashland duals while recovering from a minor injury, and will be key as Pitt has the top-ranked 174-pounder in the nation in Keith Gavin.

Last Week’s Results

Jan. 17	Women’s Basketball hosts Detroit	Wolstein Center	W, 63-41
	Men’s Basketball hosts Butler	Wolstein Center	W, 56-52
Jan. 18	Men’s Tennis at IPFW	Fort Wayne, IN	W, 6-1
	Women’s Tennis at IPFW	Fort Wayne, IN	W, 5-2
Jan. 19	Men’s Swimming at Wright State	Fairborn, OH	L, 87-136
	Women’s Swimming at Wright State	Fairborn, OH	L, 74-143
	Women’s Basketball hosts Wright State	Wolstein Center	W, 68-53
	Men’s Basketball hosts Valparaiso	Wolstein Center	W, 69-63
	Men’s Tennis at Michigan State	East Lansing, MI	L, 0-7
Jan. 20	Wrestling vs. Illinois (at Ashland Duals)	Ashland, OH	L, 0-37
Jan. 20	Wrestling at Ashland (at Ashland Duals)	Ashland, OH	W, 21-13
Jan. 20	Wrestling vs. Northern Illinois (at Ashland Duals)	Ashland, OH	L, 13-21
Jan. 21	Women’s Tennis at Michigan State	East Lansing, MI	L, 0-7
Jan. 21	Men’s Tennis at Indiana	Bloomington, IN	L, 0-7

Swimming Teams Host Niagara. . .

The men's and women's swimming and diving teams return home this weekend to host a dual meet against Niagara on Jan. 26 at Busbey Natatorium. Diving events are scheduled to begin at noon, with swimming events to follow at 1:00 p.m.

In the team's last competition at Wright State, the men lost by a 136-87 score, while the women lost by a 143-74 margin. Dan Baiko won both diving events for the sixth time this season, while Trish Simon won the women's 1-meter dive. Deni Gasparin (200 breaststroke) and Jakub Dobies (200 IM) also won races for the Vikings.

"It was a tough, tough meet," assistant coach Andrew Hancock said, "But that's what you expect when you compete against Wright State. This is exactly what we needed and we will get better with this experience."

Gasparin joined the team in January, making his first appearance a memorable one by winning the 100 breaststroke and setting himself up as one of the top breaststrokers in the Horizon League. Gasparin has now won races in both meets he has swam in.

Dan Baiko was named Horizon League Diver of the Week after winning both the 1-meter and 3-meter dives at Wright State.

Senior Lesley Jones is another upperclassmen leading by example, and was the leader in practice down in Florida and has been putting up top times for the Vikings in the sprint freestyle events.

Men's Tennis Hosts Xavier. . .

The Cleveland State men's tennis team (1-2) will host its spring home opener on Saturday, Jan. 26 when Xavier comes to River Oaks Racquet Club at 2:00 p.m.

The Vikings opened the spring season on Friday (Jan. 18) with a 6-1 win at IPFW. Sophomore Ryan Hamning (9-6) won 7-6 (5), 6-2 at No. 2 singles to lead Cleveland State. CSU faced stiff competition the remainder of the holiday weekend, being swept by two Big Ten opponents, Michigan State and Indiana.

The Vikings picked up one doubles win against Michigan State, when junior Rob West and freshman Robert Fox teamed up for an 8-5 victory at No. 2 doubles. The following day, senior Brad Groleski and junior Steven Wipprecht won 8-5 at No. 3 doubles at Indiana.

"We faced some stiff competition this weekend, winning the match we were supposed to win and playing well against two Big Ten teams," head coach Brian Etzkin said. "Last season we traveled to Xavier and beat them 4-3 in a very competitive match. We are looking forward to them coming up this weekend."

Women's Tennis Hosts Toledo. . .

The Cleveland State women's tennis team (1-1) hosts their home opener on Sunday, Jan. 27 when Toledo visits the River Oaks Racquet Club at 12:00 p.m.

The Vikings opened their spring season with a 5-2 victory over IPFW on Sunday, Jan. 20. Freshmen Jackie Tabb notched her first dual match victory, defeating Stacey Lish, 6-1, 6-1 at No. 2 singles. Tabb and sophomore Charlotte Gibbons went 2-0 at No. 1 doubles for the weekend, winning at both IPFW and Michigan State.

"We beat IPFW for the first time in a couple of tries and we definitely looked good in some spots against Michigan State," head coach Brian Etzkin said. "Toledo is a team we have struggled with in the past, but I think our combination of youth and leadership give us a chance to get a victory this weekend."

Fencing Teams Back In Action At Penn State Duals. . .

Following a seven-week break from competitive action, the men's and women's fencing teams will return to action on Saturday, Jan. 26, with seven duals apiece at the Penn State Duals in State College, Pa.

Both teams will square off against Drew University, Duke, Haverford, Penn, Penn State, Temple and UNC-Pembroke with action slated to begin at 9:00 a.m.

The teams have been out of competitive action since sweeping duals against Case Western and Oberlin on Dec. 1 in Woodling Gym.

"We have been working extremely hard to stay in good shape and I am excited to see how we compete this weekend," head coach Jim Sager said. "We've had a little extended break for the holidays, but we are going to begin a tough stretch of our schedule with several tough opponents."

Liran Gross has led the men's squad this season, posting a near flawless 34-2 mark with the foil.

Viking High Fives

Brittany Korth: The women's basketball senior hit six three-pointers last week to move into fourth place on the all-time list at CSU with 140.

Dan Baiko: The Viking senior was named Horizon League diver of the week after sweeping the diving events in each of the last two meets.

Gary Waters: Viking fans have waited so long to storm the court after a win over a ranked opponent and the second year head coach made that possible last week.

Alex Hughes: Had a pair of pins last week to raise his team-leading total to eight this season.