

# Black and Gold Player Spotlight

The Pine Needle sits down with UNCP wrestler Russell Weakley as the 2009 season comes to a close.

By Matt Smith  
Sports Editor

## What are your expectations for yourself and the team as you both close out the season?

My expectations for the team would be to finish out the season strong, keep working hard in practice and in the classroom. Also, to close out our season with more dual victories than losses and when it's time for regionals, to go there and kick butt and qualify all 10 men for nationals. We have the talent to do it and if everyone peaks at the right time and keeps focused, we should have no problem in doing so. As for my own expectations I want to keep winning, keep working hard and bring UNCP back a national title.

## Describe your experience as a UNCP student-athlete.

My experience so far at UNCP has been pretty good. I've been doing probably the best I ever have in school here and being a part of the team has been great. Everyone gets along and we all work hard so all in all it's been a great experience.

## What is your most exciting wrestling moment?

My most exciting wrestling moment would have to be when I was a sophomore in high school when I won my first state championship. I made a big improvement that year in wrestling and from that year on I've done nothing but get better not only in wrestling but also in life.

## Talk a bit about what goes on in the locker room before a match.

The locker room before a wrestling match is pretty mellow. Everyone is basically in their own little world getting focused for their match. Before we come out, Coach Gibbs will say a few words and we make our way out to take on whoever is across the mat from us.

## Who are your wrestling inspirations?

My wrestling inspirations would be my high school wrestling Coach Ryan Smith. He truly took me to a whole other level of wrestling when I first stepped in my high school wrestling room, and still to this day he gives me great advice. Also, another inspiration would be my dad. He never wrestled, but he is the hardest working guy I know, and he was always there to tell me how great of a job I had done and how proud he was of me. One thing I took to heart from my dad was he always told me no matter if you win or lose I will always know that you're a true champion because you're my son and I know you have a heart of a champion.

## What do you do personally before a match?

Before a match, I like to get a great warm up in and make myself tired so I can get my blood flowing good and get that soreness and pain out of my mind. After that I like to be alone. Being alone keeps me focused on the task at hand and just keeps my mind totally clear from anything else. It helps me prepare mentally.

## What was the last movie you watched?

The last movie I watched was "The Blind Side."

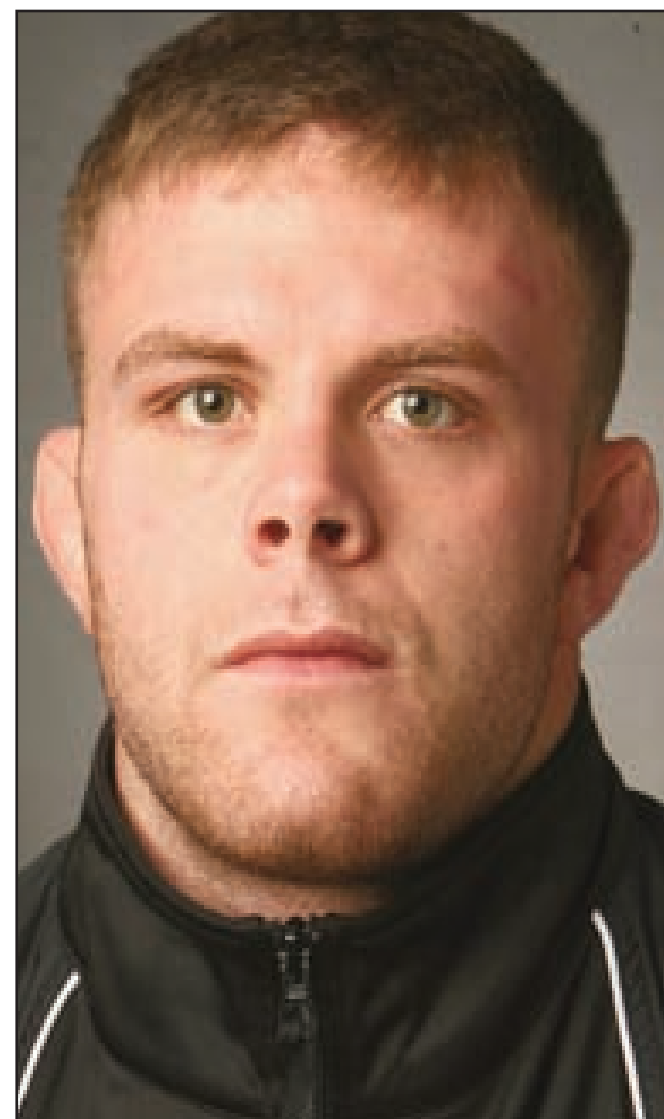


Photo courtesy of UNCP Sports Information

## Bio of the week Russell Weakley

### 2008 Season

During the 2008-2009 season, Weakley finished with a 21-3 overall record for the Braves. Weakley posted a 17-2 tournament record and a 4-1 record in dual meets. Weakley earned 11 pins and three major decisions in his contests.

Along with his stellar record, Weakley was one of two Braves who qualified for the NCAA National Championships. Weakley finished with a 1-2 record at the tournament.



Black and Gold pitcher Matt McGovern was named to the 10th Annual All-Canadian team after an impressive 2009 season with the Braves.

## McGovern earns prestigious honor

By Matt Smith  
Sports Editor

Black and Gold righthander Matt McGovern picked up another prestigious honor Jan. 7 for his efforts on the baseball diamond, as the senior pitcher earned a starting spot on the 10th annual All-Canadian Team.

The team honors the best of the 711 Canadian players in the United

States at the NCAA Division I, II, and III levels, as well as players at NAIA and NJCAA institutions.

McGovern was selected to the All-Canadian first team after posting a flawless 9-0 mark for the Braves in 2009.

The Ottawa, Canada, native posted a 2.63 earned run average, good for third best in the Peach Belt Conference, and had two complete games for

the Black and Gold last year.

As a junior, McGovern struck out 59 batters while allowing opponents to hit just .260 against him. Along with his impressive overall statistics, McGovern thrived against big time opponents, going 4-0 against nationally ranked teams last season.

### 2009 season

With the Braves last

year, the righty earned all-conference, all-region, and all-American laurels.

Prior to joining UNCP last fall, McGovern pitched two years at Monroe Community College in New York. At Monroe, McGovern finished with a perfect 13-0 overall record.

McGovern and the Braves will look to carry the success of their 37-win 2009 campaign into this season.

## Braves make preseason team

By Matt Smith  
Sports Editor

On Jan. 22, the Peach Belt Conference announced that two UNCP baseball players were selected for the 2010 Peach Belt Conference Baseball Preseason All-Conference team.

The team, composed of 11 players across the conference, featured two Braves for their efforts in the 2009 season.

Seth Kivett, a senior from Bear Creek, N.C., earned a spot on the team after an impressive offensive performance in 2009 at the first base position for the Braves.

The Black and Gold infielder batted .342 on the season, with 27 extra-base hits. Kivett set a school homerun record last season with 16 round-trippers, and recorded 50 RBIs and 57 runs scored in the team's 2009 campaign.

Kivett was the only Brave to start all 54 games last year, and committed just three errors in 480 total chances at the first base position.

Joining Kivett on the Preseason All-Conference team was UNCP right-handed pitcher Matt

McGovern.

McGovern, who finished last season as a second team all-American, had a perfect record for the Black and Gold last season on the mound.

The Ottawa, Canada, native finished 9-0 for the Braves last year, ranking third in the PBC with a 2.63 earned run average. McGovern threw 75.1 innings last season, with two complete games. McGovern was 4-0 against nationally ranked opponents in 2009.

McGovern held opponents to a .260 batting average and struck out a total of 59 batters last year.

The Braves hope that the two All-Conference selections can duplicate the success of a team high 37-win season in 2009.

In 2009, the Black and Gold finished 30th in the final Division II baseball rankings after breaking nine school records. The Braves set new high marks in wins (37), team batting average (.327) and homeruns (70).

UNCP will kick off its season Feb. 1 against Coker College and will play their first five away games before their home opener Feb. 13.