

New Milford wrestlers gearing up for SWC title defense

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New Milford's Mel Ortiz and Masuk's Tore Gambino wrestle for the 126 pound weight class SWC wrestling championship on Saturday, February 11, 2017, at New Fairfield High School, in New Fairfield, Conn.

The 13 South-West Conference championship banners in the last 16 years are impressive, and the undefeated record in the conference this regular season is nice, but the New Milford High School wrestlers are not taking anything for granted as they prepare for Saturday's SWC championship tournament, which will be held in their home gym.

Because, regardless of their winning tradition and stacked lineup — the Green Wave has four SWC champs back from last year — they realize that nothing will be handed to them.

"We feel pretty positive about how we're going to do," Green Wave senior Mel Ortiz said prior to Thursday's practice. "We work hard every day, and we've put in a lot of time. I think that'll pay off in the end."

There were five other teams with winning dual-meet records in the SWC this season: Barlow, Newtown, Weston, Bethel and Pomperaug. Whether or not they have enough to take down mighty New Milford remains to be seen, but the Green Wave is leaving nothing to chance.

"We have a solid group," New Milford coach Chris Piel said. "The kids know how to wrestle, and if they do their jobs, hopefully at the end of the night, we'll be holding the banner. But there are some really tough teams out there that we have to go through first."

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