

# “Wrestlers must have strong discipline, one of the cornerstones of being a cadet.”

Discipline is what has allowed Clifton to balance academics, wrestling and the Corps.

“I like to work hard, and I enjoy wrestling,” said Clifton. “I think that the wrestling team gets more respect from the Corps because of the rigorous physical training required.”

A typical week for an in-season wrestler begins with a workout before sunrise Monday. The morning workouts vary depending upon the time of season and can be anything from timed sprints around the track on a cold January morning to grueling sessions in the weight room with the strength and conditioning coach. But the workouts don't

do justice to the actual practice every afternoon. Practice lasts up to three hours, not including the five-mile downtown loop they sometimes run before practice begins. A typical afternoon practice begins with



a light warm-up and stretching. The next part of practice is usually light drill where the wrestlers go through their repertoire of moves and techniques.

By this point in the practice they are already drenched in sweat and breathing hard, but they have not even begun the tough part yet when the wrestlers go 100 percent and have situational drills and real matches. During this phase it is not uncommon to see the coaches in the mix going over a particular area that may need improvement. This part of practice can last up to an hour and a half and is demanding, even for the spectators. After a quick water break the final stage is usually some type of cardio-endurance training. This may seem cruel, but is, in fact, crucial in preparation for the real matches when every bit of conditioning counts, especially in the final minutes of the match. The training may vary from timed sprints on a bike, timed reaction drills where the wrestlers follow their coach's commands or just a set of wind sprints to the opposite side of the room and back.

“The absolute worst part of practice is when we do seven-in-one sprints on the Airdyne bikes—I have thrown up every time,” said Clifton.

It is no surprise that after practice the room is silent and the mats are covered with sweat. Often a trail of puddles leads down the stairs to the locker room.

The team's success stems from their head coach's determination. Rob Hjerling has built the program into a Southern Conference powerhouse, constantly pushing his team to do its best. During his tenure as head coach, each season schedule has become harder than the last, and the team is challenged more each year. His tireless efforts are also evident in his expansive recruiting that ranges all over the country.

When asked about his secret to success Hjerling said, “Having short-term and long-term goals and the ability to make adjustments without compromising them is a key factor in the team's success.”

As he heads into his sixth season, Hjerling's goal is for his team members to reach their full potential, something that he feels that they have not done yet.

The Citadel wrestlers may have won the conference this year, but they have bigger plans for the future. They want to continue their Southern Conference domination and they want more individual conference champions, more All-Americans and more Academic All-Americans. These goals can only be fulfilled by discipline, hard work and determination. The wrestling team has demonstrated that it has all of these qualities for success and will only continue to aim high and strive for perfection.

“The sky is the limit. We are only losing one starter next season, we have five national qualifiers returning, and I think that we will be pretty good next year,” said Clifton.