

Young Sisters wrestlers shine in long season

By **Jim Cornelius**
Editor in Chief

It takes a lot of dedication to become a champion club wrestler. The training is tough, and the long season of strenuous competition is a grind. And you hardly ever get to eat ice cream.

That’s a lot to ask of a 12- or 13-year-old kid, but those are the demands that Jeffrey Schuler and Triston White chose to put on themselves, competing in USA Wrestling from November through June. It was worth it though, as both boys won close to their weight in medals and trophies — while growing immeasurably in the process.

“It’s tough; it’s probably the most dedicated sport,” said Schuler, a 12-year-old Sisters sixth-grader.

His dad, also Jeffrey, trains his son and Triston.

“You’re constantly thinking about your weight, your conditioning,” he said.

Academics come first with the elder Jeffrey Schuler, but after that, the young athletes spend hours on the mats and doing bodyweight conditioning — pull-ups, pushups, sit-ups, squats — in preparation for the Salt Lake Regionals, where he took first-place and fourth-place honors, in different disciplines. Jeffrey worked with trainer Andrew Loscutt at Sisters Athletic Club.

The wrestlers don’t have to be pushed to put in the work.

“I just want to get better, so I keep going to practice every day,” young Jeffrey says. “I felt like I could do more this year than I did last year, because I have experience.”

Both Triston and Jeffrey worked four days a week, every week, and traveled to tournaments throughout Oregon and other western states.

“The main thing is, they were bought in — especially nutrition-wise,” Schuler senior said. “In anything in life, if you are bought into it, you’re going to succeed. If you’re all-in, it’s like money in the bank.”

Jeffrey concurred, recalling that there were times when he could have given up in a match, but simply refused to let his shoulder go down on the mat.

“I just think of all the hard work I’ve done and I’ve got to make it pay out,” he said. “The mind gives up before the body; that’s how it works.”

The 110-pound 12-year-old often wrestled up at 117 pounds.

Jeffrey enjoyed some

signal successes in addition to a first at Salt Lake. He placed second in Oregon state freestyle and Greco-Roman and took a third, a second, and a fifth place in the USA Western States Championships in Pocatello, Idaho.

Triston White, who was in Idaho and could not participate in an interview, also had a strong season, culminating with three first-place showings at USA Western.

White is exceptionally big and strong, which helped him to a stellar showing last year, his first in the sport. This year was a different story.

Schuler said that some of the wrestlers in Triston’s bracket improved and got bigger and stronger themselves.

“He was the target, because a year ago he won the triple crown in state,” Schuler said.

The picture had changed, and Triston faced adversity.

“A year ago, he could get in a bad spot and he could muscle the kid and get out of the bad spot,” Schuler said.

This year, he had to avoid getting into those bad spots.

He had to become a better wrestler. And in the second half of the season, he rose to the challenge.

“He had to up his game; he knew that,” Schuler said.

White got leaner and improved his conditioning. And he improved the mental side of the sport.

“I would say that Triston ... has ... educated himself better in the sport,” Schuler said. “Each one of those tournaments, he grew mentally.”

Growth is ultimately what it’s all about. Jeffrey says that wrestling prepares him for all kinds of challenges.

“If you kinda like contact sports, that’s the sport for you,” he said. “It can get you ready for football; it can get you ready for anything. It’s a tough mental sport.”

For Schuler, the greatest satisfaction comes from witnessing and encouraging that progress. He can guide the athletes, but he can’t do the work for them. Seeing them do it for themselves is gratifying.

“You have to plant a seed for them to grow on their own,” he said. “That’s a big deal. And they did grow.”



PHOTO BY JIM CORNELIUS

Jeffrey Schuler collected a raft of medals and a nice trophy for his wrestling — but the reward is really about becoming a strong, skilled, mentally tough athlete.

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