

# ALVARO,

continued from Page A10

(Jimenez) took me to dinner that night and told me to stick it out. The next day I took part in a cadet tournament and placed third. I was still a chunky 220, but the muscle had started forming and I thought maybe I could do something with this," Venegas said.

Ebbs kept an eye on Venegas' development in the following months, particularly when he needed a shot of confidence.

"When we sent him to the district tournament and we told him, 'You are going to state if you perform.' He did not believe it until he found himself wrestling in the third place match and having already qualified for state," Ebbs said.

The confidence gained there carried over to the next season.

"I went into junior year and suddenly my body just started falling off. I was working out twice a day. I was wrestling with Zach and he's a competitive guy. I was eating a lot and still dropping weight," Venegas said.

When the Classic rolled around again, Venegas weighed 202 and Ebbs approached him about cutting to 199 since there was a four-pound variance according to the rules of the Classic.

"The night before the tournament, the other guys on the team had me and Taran (Purkey) in layers of sweats and we had to tag every other team member. I wasn't eating or drinking and I lost like 12 pounds that night. Woke up the next day and wrestled like crap," he said. "I didn't win a match and messed up my shoulder."

By the time Venegas began his senior year, he was a lean and muscled 195. He's started running twice a day and joined the cross country team with some coercion from wrestling teammate Riley Repp.

As he began racking up wins, the sky didn't even seem like a limit. He was only pinned once and was soon leading state rankings. He capped the Greater Valley Conference season with a district title despite suffering a dislocated shoulder in the finals match.

A week prior, Venegas was joined by his mother on the mat for Senior Night. She's been mostly wheelchair-bound for the past three years after a diagnosis with multiple sclerosis eight years ago.

"I just try to do as much as I can when I can. My goal is to do more now that my schedule isn't as weird with wrestling," Venegas said.

Despite her illness, Venegas said his mother still insists on cooking dinner even if her sons need to help her.

"It's one of the reasons I'm scared to leave for college. I will do more now, but I feel the responsibility to her," he said.

Venegas would like to go to Clackamas Community College, home to a powerhouse wrestling squad, where he might get more looks from four-year colleges and universities.

"I'm not quite ready to hang up the towel yet. I would love to wrestle in the PAC 12," he said.

Ebbs said Venegas's biggest impact was on his teammates, with or without a state title.

"It was very clear to see the positive impact he had on people, how he made them feel, how he helped them perform better, and how he tried to have everyone operate at a high standard with a 'team' mentality. He helped others around him be better and that will not be forgotten," Ebbs said.

Given the amount of dedication - as well as the results he's seen - it would be easy for Venegas to rest on his laurels, but the attitude that's carried him through the ups and downs is still his defining characteristic.

"I saw some of the older guys lose, get angry and talk about how much they hated their opponents," he said. "Anyone who wrestles ... I don't care if you win a single match, but if you can survive the wrestling room, the workouts, the cutting weight, the getting beat up, I have respect for you."

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