

Tribal member takes state wrestling title

Matt Hofenbredl becomes first Dallas High freshman to win championship

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

Tribal member and wrestling phenom Matt Hofenbredl, 15, brought his more than 50 wins this year to the state championship in Portland on Feb. 24-25 and came home first in the state in the 5A division.

Hofenbredl is a freshman and is the first freshman in Dallas High School history to win a state title.

Hofenbredl brought nearly a lifetime of wrestling experience to the state tournament, and his future on the mat continues to look unlimited.

"I felt like I could take it pretty easily," Hofenbredl said, "if I wrestled my best."

This year, Hofenbredl, in the 106-pound class, and Ben Rebeschke, a senior in the 220-pound class, won their weight classes to lead the Dallas High School Dragons to their first state wrestling title.

Hofenbredl's toughest match, he said, came in the quarter finals against Pendleton's Colton Skeen, whom he has wrestled and defeated before.

"It was great," said Tribal member Leland Hofenbredl, Matt's father, who has supported his son since the beginning, encouraging travel across the country and for Matt to compete. "It's quite an accomplishment," he added, "but I knew he could do it."

Strategy, much of it coming from Matt's own instincts, play a big part in his efforts on the mat.

"If they're watching me, I want to give them something different than what they've seen (me do in previous matches)," Matt said about how he changes his take-down styles with each successive match.



Photo courtesy of Pete Strong/Polk County Itemizer-Observer

Tribal member and Dallas High School freshman Matt Hofenbredl gains the advantage over Mountain View's J.T. Ayres in the 106-pound championship match during the 2012 OSAA wrestling state championship at Memorial Coliseum in Portland on Saturday, Feb. 25. Hofenbredl won the match to take the state title in the weight class.

"If I feel like I can get the shot," Matt said, "I'll take it."

"He wrestles everybody different," said Leland. "He goes out and does what he needs to do."

All of which is not to say that Leland sits on the sideline with calm confidence. He showed a video of Matt's final match taken by a friend. Beyond Matt making the win look easy, the video camera held very steady throughout the match.

"I couldn't hold the camera during the match," Leland said. "It would be all over the place."

Matt joined the Dallas Mat Club when he was 6 and took top honors in the PeeWee division that year. At 12, Matt won the Oregon Kids

Collegiate wrestling championship, wrestling in the 75-pound novice division.

He was named an all-American wrestler two years ago in Illinois at the Middle School Nationals and last year he made the podium in Reno at the Reno World Tournament, where he placed fourth.

And this year, on the way to state, Matt also won at the District 5A tournament as well as tournaments at Dallas and Willamina high schools.

The town really came out to support the Dragons. Leland showed a whole section at Portland's Veterans' Memorial Coliseum, where the state championships were held, and said, "They're all from Dallas."

"I'll bet half the town came out," said Leland.

"Dad," said Matt, "there are 7,000 people in town."

But it was a lot of people and a lot of cheering.

Dallas High also had a little fun with Hermiston High School, a perennial state wrestling winner in the 5A division. After winning, the Dallas team members received T-shirts with the winning information emblazoned on them, but the Dragons' black and orange colors were changed to purple and yellow, the colors that otherwise represent the Hermiston team.

Following the win, Matt was nominated for the Salem Statesman-Journal's Athlete of the Week award. He came in second to a Sprague senior who had won the state title for the fourth consecutive year.

After the victory, the team treated the wrestlers to dinner at a Red Robin restaurant. It was good, Matt said, but he couldn't remember what exactly it was that he had to eat.

In April, Matt heads back to Reno for another shot at the nationals. ■

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