

Mike Neyman

Neyman Hopes First Brother To Crack State

Competing on the Hermiston High wrestling team has, over the years, been quite a family affair for the Neymans.

Marty and Maurice have graduated but they wrestled for several seasons for the Bulldogs. Mike, a senior, and Mark, a sophomore 141-pounder, are on Hermiston's team again this year. Waiting in the wings is second grader Matt.

The grapplers from the Neyman household have enjoyed some big moments on the mats. However, one of the accomplishments that eluded Marty, now wrestling at Mt. Hood Community College, and Maurice was a trip to the state AAA tournament in Portland.

Mike, who is 17 years old, is hopeful this is the year he'll be able to go one up on his older brothers.

"I'd like to go to the state tournament and get some kind of place there," Mike observed. He also noted he'd like to "wrestle in the district finals, since it's in Hermiston."

Those are pretty lofty goals, but coach Rod Bragato said that Mike, who stands 5-foot-5 and wrestles at 130 pounds, is capable of reaching them.

"He's a smart wrestler," commented Bragato. "He always knows his situation" on the mat.

Mike owned a 14-6 season record heading into the district tournament last year. He finished fifth at district in the 126-pound weight class.

Mike did a lot of running, swimming and weight lifting during the summer. His conditioning work also stretched into the fall months.

"I wanted to do better this year than I did last year," said Mike.

He believes his route to success is paved with hard work. "You have to put in extra work," said Mike. "Good wrestlers do. You can't get around it. I haven't seen anyone that could."

Mike had a job at the Hermiston swimming pool over the summer. He ran to work, swam whenever he could and also took advantage of the access he had to the high school's weight room.

"I didn't wrestle a whole lot during the summer," he pointed out. "Workout partners are a little hard to find."

A couple of summers ago Mike did all kinds of wrestling. He even traveled with a group of matmen from Oregon back to the U.S. Wrestling Federation National Junior Championships back in Iowa. The four matches he wrestled at that prestigious tournament still rank among his biggest mat highlights.

Mike has been involved in wrestling for around seven years.

"I really don't know why I'm in wrestling," he smiled. "You have to run all the time,

work hard in practice."

But, Bragato calls Mike one of his most dedicated wrestlers. He said that he is physically stronger than he was last year and that he utilizes his strength, intelligence and skills well.

"He doesn't waste a lot of energy" during a match, said Bragato.

The Hermiston coach observed that Mike's style is one that will work for him at state. He just needs to refine his moves and attack with them at a little quicker pace.

While his brothers also took part in cross-country and track, wrestling has been Mike's only athletic endeavor on the high school level.

He was active in all the sports in junior high, with no particular favorite. "I just went out for the next one in line," Mike said. Football, basketball, track "just didn't seem like they were for me."

His decision to stick with wrestling is proving to be a wise one. His father Martin coached him at the junior high and is now "one of my biggest fans." His brothers "have helped me a lot."

Mike has started the 1982-83 season in good fashion. At a big tournament at Pacific University in Forest Grove, Mike scored a decision over Andre Taylor, a talented wrestler from Benson High. Last week in Othello, Wash., Mike defeated Pendleton's Mike Dawson, who had beaten him at last year's district tournament.

Mike's aim was to come into this season in "really good shape" and with plenty of "mental toughness."

"That's one of the things I have to work on...get ready and treat each match like it's really important."

He feels he is strongest on takedowns and escapes. Bragato said Mike needs to concentrate on improving his pinning moves.

Mike was looking forward to some tough team battles with wrestling powers Pendleton and La Grande this season. The Bulldogs' chances of upsetting either the Bucks or Tigers have been hurt by an onslaught of injuries.

"We expected to have really good matches with them," said Mike. (But) as each person goes it kind of takes away from that a little bit."

If Mike does indeed make the district finals, his opponent will most likely be Pendleton's Randy Schimmel, who is one of the best grapplers in the IMC. Ron DePue of Crook County will be another formidable opponent.

Mike is satisfied with how the season, still in its infancy, has started out.

"All," he said, "except for losing a few teammates."

Hermiston High will be hosting a three-way meet with Richland and Othello Friday evening.

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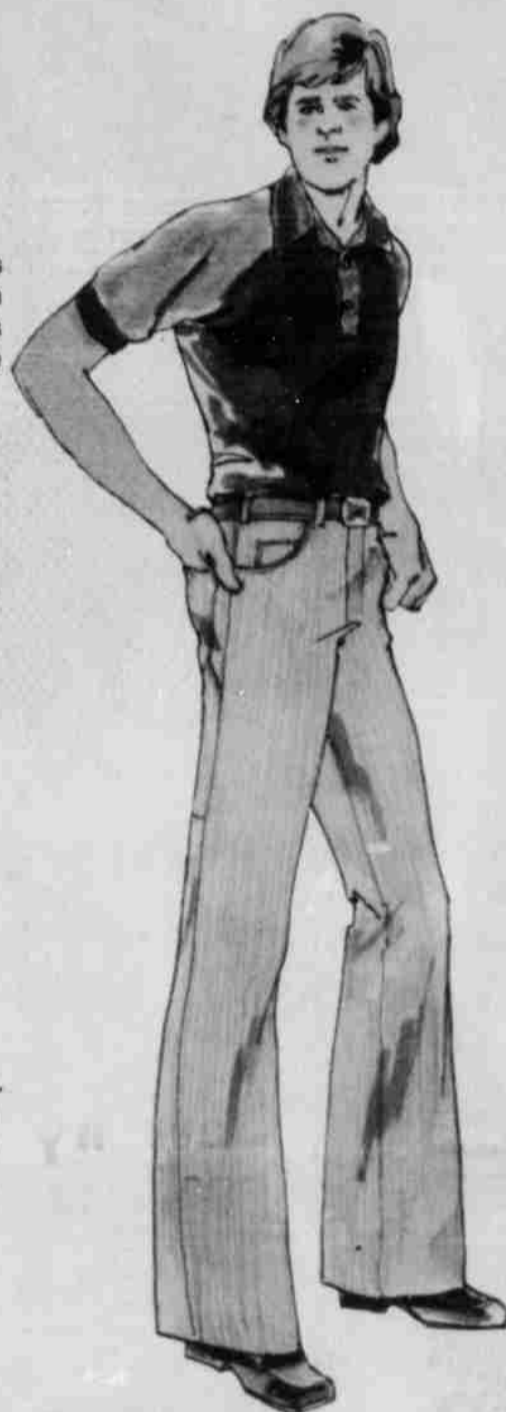
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