

# Hermiston's champion

Hermiston's Alice Todryk part of the increasing number of girls participating in wrestling

By **ALEXIS MANSANAREZ**  
STAFF WRITER

HERMISTON — Before Hermiston's Alice Todryk and Samantha Dara of Grants Pass faced off in the girls 100-pound championship wrestling match at the OSAA State Championships in Portland on Feb. 18, the two talked, joked and warmed up together.

They had previously met on the Oregon prep wrestling scene, which Todryk has now been a part of for two years, and they quickly became friends. The pair wrestled each other just a month prior in the girls state qualifying tournament, where Todryk beat Dara in the second round by fall in the first period of their bout.

So, at the state tournament Dara gave Todryk somewhat of a warning before their rematch.

"You're not going to get me in a cradle," Todryk recalls Dara saying.

But just 3:38 into the match, Todryk put Dara in a cradle for a pin to cap of her junior season as Oregon's 100-pound state champion.

The match, however, was an exhibition event overseen by the Oregon Wrestling Association and not the OSAA, as girls wrestling on its own has not yet been sanctioned by the OSAA.

Despite the formality, Todryk was the only Bulldog who made the trip to



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Hermiston junior Alice Todryk is one of two girls on the school's wrestling team. On Saturday, at the OSAA State Wrestling Tournament, she was the only Bulldog to finish first and bring home a state championship. Todryk defeated Samantha Dara of Grants Pass to win the girls 100-pound exhibition class.

Portland who stood atop the podium, which was hard to believe at first.

"Once we got to the awards podium I was pretty excited but during the match I was like, 'Is this real?,' Todryk thought at the time. "It didn't seem (real), everything was just all happening at once and it was all kind of a blur."

The blur of a bout made Todryk the second-winningest female wrestler of any weight class in the entire state. Her 22-6 record was behind Hood River Valley 135-pound junior Elena Kroll, who finished the season 36-11.

"I was really happy," Todryk said of her champi-

onship season. "Everyone has kind of been doubting me this year and not giving me as much respect as I need and I think after it'll show them how much dedication and time I put into wrestling."

Todryk was first introduced to the sport in 2006 at the age of six, when her father told her that joining a wrestling program would be good preparation for a future career in the military — something Todryk knew she wanted to do even at that young age.

"I wasn't that good my first year," she remembers. "(I) maybe won one match my first year and two my second year. It was

more just that it was fun and there were other girls on the team when I first started in Montana so that's when I thought, 'Okay, (girls) wrestling is no big deal.'"

It wasn't until Todryk moved to Wisconsin in 2008 and started honing her craft that she felt pushback from other wrestlers. Once she started improving, boys on the team wouldn't want to face her in fear of defeat, she says now with a small smirk forming.

The pushback has been one of the most challenging aspects of the sport.

"The fact that people don't believe I can actually do it and that they don't think that girls are actually

any good," Todryk said is frustrating. "So, it's so cool when I actually show them and they are like, 'Wow she is actually good, she can actually wrestle.'"

Through it all, Todryk still had fun wrestling the boys and worked to get other girls to join her in the program in the Midwest.

As she improved on the mat, she began traveling nationally and internationally, wrestling in Canada and Sweden. By the time Todryk moved to the Pacific Northwest and was gearing up for high school, she was looking to become a part of a well-established program with a good track record. That's something she found

in Hermiston, where she has been thriving despite facing those frustrating challenges.

"Once you make a name for yourself, it's really cool, you get to know a lot of people," she said. "I can't go anywhere in the country for a wrestling event and people don't know who I am."

It's the kind of success her six-year-old self couldn't fathom, but now in the best shape she's ever been in Todryk is relishing in the success she is bringing not only to herself but to a program that will soon have a sanctioned girls team.

When Hermiston moves into the WIAA next year, it will be joining an organization that has permitted girls events for over a decade.

The sanctioning process began with the 2003-04 season with 68 girls competing. After becoming official in 2007, there were 159 girls wrestling. Now as of 2017, more than 1,000 girls take the mat in the state of Washington, which is one of only eight states to sanction girls wrestling.

Oregon and Georgia are the two newest states to join Hawaii (1998) Texas (1999), California (2011), Alaska (2014), Tennessee (2015) and Washington. The OSAA's executive board recently voted to sanction girls wrestling beginning with the 2018-19 school year after seeing a continued increase in participation across the state.

The chance to face girls who have gone through a pipeline and have had the experience that Todryk herself has gained over the years excites the 4-foot-10 100-pound wrestler.

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