



**THE
MENTALITY
OF CHAMPIONS**

It's uncommon to wrestle without getting some of the side effects. There's a chance you'll likely end up with ringworm or cauliflower ear but undoubtedly at Interstate 35, you will become apart of a family. In a room filled with wrestling mats, sweat, and a thermostat set to 85 degrees the strongest and most determined athletes are forged. Interstate's success in wrestling revolves around dedicated coaches and team leaders that lead by example and motivate others to make the sacrifices necessary to win.

It's evident that the nature of intense sacrifice and determination in wrestling brings the team together. "In wrestling, everything is together. When you wake up, go into school in the morning and all your buddies are around checking their weight because they are disciplined. They are going at it day in and day out. You're all going after the same thing and you're going after it together," said Austin Beener, senior wrestler.

The unanimity, determination, and the desire to win amongst the wrestlers is not an accident. Interstate's wrestling program is a product of very dedicated coaching according to Hannah Grandstaff, senior wrestling cheerleader.

"It's more developed over time, from my freshmen year to my senior year, I feel like we have a lot better leadership," said Hannah Grandstaff, senior wrestling cheerleader. "Those boys really look up to their coaches. Travis Brant has worked with some of

those boys since middle school. I think the coaches really just put in that work ethic, what it means to be a wrestler, and how to win."

Appreciation for the coaching staff was furthered by Beener speaking about Ryan Snyder, head coach of Interstate's program and former Army Ranger, "You can just plainly talk to him and he has a way of inspiring you. What I can say about Snyder is he always pushes and inspires you. He cares about every single person out there." Beener explained how Snyder worked to help provide new equipment such as new mats, monkey bars, ropes, and a shooting dummy summarizing it by saying, "It's not just his hobby, it's his job and his business. He's doing it, he's not half-assing it by any means."

The passion for improving the sport at Interstate and the love for competition is in no way limited to the coaching staff, a point clearly made by Sal Arzani, Interstate 35 alum, and last year's Class 1A 160 state champion, "I love it because it's not a sport or something you play. It's a way of life. Day in and day out, in season or out of season, wrestling has taught me how to be my best when I'm at my worst emotionally," explained Arzani. "All my aches and pains I have, cracking joints, and hurt body parts that will forever hurt. I love wrestling because I know how far I can push myself in everything. Everything I gave, I gave it for my family, for my God, for my team and my coaches, for this community."

On Interstate's team, motivators and leaders outside of the coaching staff are an essential. "A lot of kids need someone to look up to and I have to prepare myself to be an example for everyone else in the room," said Dante Arzani, senior wrestler and state qualifier. While Arzani is a key motivator for the team, motivation and leadership are not unilateral.

"Genaro was probably, last year, one of my biggest motivators because he took a pounding like all the time. I thought, dang I've got to help him push through this. I'd go after him and just go and talk to him and say 'you're okay, it's a learning experience'. Honestly, he's a fighter and he's so competitive. I don't think he knew it but he helped me stay pumped and ready to go for everything," explained Dante Arzani, about now sophomore, Genaro Gutierrez.

The winning mentality at I-35 can be summarized by the similar, unhesitant, and unprompted response of these three senior wrestlers:

"My goal? I have one goal and that's to win state," said Dante Arzani.

"I want to go to state and win it," said Beener.

"My goal for this wrestling season is to bring home my own individual state title, dual team state title, and individual team state title," said Nathan Phillips.