

Two Paths

Rowland and Helgeson take different paths to state

The home crowd at Johnston went wild. They belted out “TWOOOO” in a low-pitched roar. Junior Caleb Helgeson was jumping up and down like he had just made state, but this wasn’t his match. Senior Tanner Rowland just scored a double leg takedown with fewer than 10 seconds left to get to the state tournament. A year earlier he only won six matches. “You see a guy who won six matches the year before, and was just surviving more or less,” head coach Aaron Tecklenburg said. “You turn around one year later, and he’s in the district championship with a trip to state on the line. I get goose bumps just thinking about it.”

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 Going into the season, Helgeson and Rowland had extremely different goals. Helgeson was coming off two years placing at state and was considered one of the best wrestlers in the state at 160 lbs. while Rowland was coming off his first year ever wrestling. Yet Helgeson’s friendship with Rowland extended to the wrestling mat. “This year I knew he (Rowland) had a shot to be pretty good, so we got him out to wrestle again. During most of his matches I was the one coaching him,” Helgeson said.

Midway through the year Helgeson was a casual 17-0 and ranked number one in the state. While Helgeson thriving wasn’t shocking, Rowland was shocking himself with a record of 14-5. “Before the season started I had a goal of trying to get 13 wins, and it wasn’t until about halfway through the season I realized I had a shot to go to state,” Rowland said.

The wins kept piling up for the two, each reaching heights they had never been at. Heading into districts Helgeson was 28-0 with 16 pins and 8 tech falls. Rowland had over tripled his wins from last year with a record of 20-12. Helgeson breezed through his semifinal and finals matches. Rowland had to go into overtime to win in the semifinals, which got Helgeson excited. It wasn’t winning districts or a tournament. It wasn’t getting third at state. It was watching his best friend win a big match. Helgeson said “My favorite memory was when Tanner beat the Roosevelt kid in the semi finals at districts, and I got so excited, maybe a little too excited but it was one of my best moments of this year.”

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 After the clock hit zero, Rowland was going to state. His hand was raised and the crowd went wild again. Rowland went over and got a hug from Tecklenburg. “Most kids would kill to experience the feeling he felt in that gym,” Tecklenburg said. After hugging his coach the first person to congratulate Rowland was his best friend, someone who coaches described as “a role model to the team, and someone who just competed 30 minutes ago. Helgeson was there in his corner to congratulate Rowland. He was in his corner the whole time.



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