



Wrestling pins down school history

Team places fourth in state

JACOB SICILIANO

Online Editor-in-Chief

Senior wrestling captain Jacob Grzesiak paced back and forth behind Prospect's bench at the state quarterfinal in Bloomington. Heart racing out of his chest, he focused all of his attention on the mat. A Prospect win would clinch history.

Grzesiak recalled his time on the state mat, gazing at the lights and taking in his final weekend as a wrestler. Despite having never wrestled before high school, Grzesiak became a captain in his fourth year in the program. He poured his soul into the team, and now the goal he had worked towards for four years hung in the hands of freshman Elijah Garza.

Prospect had to win one of the next three matches, or their season would be over. Grzesiak began to pace again as the match started. Every member of the Knights' 21-man roster was on their feet. Garza got one takedown, and then another. Each time his opponent hit the floor, Prospect's bench erupted. When the clock hit zeros, Garza was on top. Prospect had won the match 35-30.

After defeating Moline, the Knights lost to the eventual

champion, Mount Carmel, in the semifinal and fell to Lockport in the third-place game. Prospect had lost their final two matchups, but it didn't matter. They had done what no wrestling team had done in District 214 history: they were bringing home a state trophy.

When interim head coach Dan Keller began coaching Prospect wrestling 12 years ago, he and the other coaches made a goal to put their team on the map. Over those next 12 years, Keller believed that they had accomplished that goal. However, one thing had always eluded the program: a state trophy.

Prior to this year, Prospect had been to the team state tournament in Bloomington only three times, losing in the first round each year. But this season, Prospect cleared that roadblock.

"It's unbelievable; this was the goal from day one," Keller said before the awards presentation. "I'm on cloud nine right now; I could not be more happy for these kids."

While Prospect had the Cinderella finish that they had dreamed of, things did not start out the way they had hoped, as the team ended their season with a record of 25-9. More importantly, the Knights lost the MSL East for the first time in six years.

"When we have a goal of [making] team state, we shouldn't lose something of that caliber," junior Will Baysingar said on losing the MSL East. "But I think

that [the loss] turned our team around, gave us motivation and [a wake-up call]."

Along with losing the East, Baysingar credits the Deerfield meet as the turning point in their season. Prospect won the meet but still felt that they were not wrestling to their fullest potential. So, the team captains began holding extra practices outside of school with the state tournament in mind. Prospect was beginning to build a team culture. According to Grzesiak, this culture was the team's biggest strength.

"Man, we've got some guys with heart," Grzesiak said. "They give it their all out there ... [it] doesn't matter the talent level someone has; if they don't work hard, they're gonna get beat by hard-working people with heart."

Junior Damien Puma is the definition of someone with heart. Puma started the Knights' state matchup against Lockport with a pin and has served as one of the most consistent wrestlers on the Knights' roster, all with torn ligaments on the side of his knee.

Wrestling in the semi-final at the Moore/Prettyman invitational on Nov. 17 in Barrington, Puma found his leg grappled by an opponent. When his leg was pulled, Puma felt his knee pop.

"My leg was just aching," Puma said. "It was hard to go down the stairs; it was really hard to walk, but I just sucked it up."

Puma buried his pain and won the match. He traveled back to Barrington the next day, although he ultimately lost in the finals. Puma was told that he had torn his LCL and part of his meniscus.

Surgery would be required. But instead of shutting his season down, Puma asked for a brace. He proceeded to wrestle the rest of the season and played a large role in the Knights' success.

"There was not a day that he complained about that brace," Keller said. "He was in the room every day working, ... [and] that's



what our program is all about."

The only other wrestler to get a pin in the third-place match was Baysingar. Coming into the season, he was ranked 24th in the nation. Baysingar, who wrestles in the 132 weight class, committed to the University of Illinois this November.

As a sophomore, Baysingar won individual state in the 120 weight class.

However, this season, Baysingar wasn't the one with his hand raised. He took second in the 132 weight class, and that loss left him

with a fire inside.

"That's a burning passion in my heart," Baysingar said. "[Losing the individual state final] is motivation for a whole year."

Baysingar used that motivation to help lead Prospect past Moline in the quarterfinal at team state. It's a moment Puma said he will never forget.

"It's amazing being the first team in Prospect history [to medal at state]," Puma said. "Words could never describe the feeling." **P**



TAKEDOWN: Junior Lennon Steinkuehler covers a lockport wrestler at the third place match in the IHSAA team state tournament. (photo courtesy of Frank Mirandola)

Star triple jumper strides to top of Illinois rankings

NIC FARDELLA

Sports Reporter

On Feb. 19, girls' track athlete Daria Tersina broke the school's record for the triple jump, which she had already broken once before.

Tersina jumped 39 feet, 3 inches, and is ranked as the number one returning triple jumper in Illinois; now, she is looking to win state in that event for the Knights.

Tersina is looking to become the fourth athlete to win state for the Knights.

She didn't gain this title for no reason. sprints coach Lance Burmeister attributes her success to her work ethic.

"She is a person that works all year long for track," Burmeister said. "It is something that is very important to her."

Tersina goes to Tom Nelson Training in Mount Prospect every single day for about an hour and a half to train, during which time Tersina does flys, accelerations and lifting and jump exercises like bounding, which is a run with leaping strides.

"We have her mimic the

PROSPECT RECORD SETTER

Senior Daria Tersina holds three school track & field records:

- 4 by 200 meter relay: 1:43:23 (freshman year)
- 100 meters: 12.32 (junior year)
- Triple jump: 39 feet 3 inches (senior year)

movement of the jump," jumps coach Andy Weis said. "I have her go on the treadmill to go through each phase of the jump. I do this so she gets the repetition down."

Tersina is intensely focused on everything she does. She is told what to do and then works hard to perfect the exercise.

Due in part to this work ethic, Tersina committed to Winona State University, a Division II school in Minnesota, to compete in track and field.

"I really liked the environment and people there," Tersina said. "It really felt like a family there."

Because of Tersina's work ethic, she has high expectations of herself.

Her main goal for this season is to achieve all state for the 100 and 200 meter dash races, as well as for the triple jump.

Tersina first started track in

sixth grade while attending St. Emily Catholic School, which she attended from kindergarten to eighth grade.

"I wanted to do a sport and found track," Tersina said. "I have loved track ever since and have no regrets in choosing it."

Tersina first got introduced to the long and triple jump when she entered Prospect.

She knew from middle school that she was naturally better at sprints, but when she got into high school, her coaches had her try jumps. She hasn't looked back since.

"When I first saw Tersina, I knew she was going to be great [at jumps] because she was very strong and speedy," Weis said.

The triple jump was a favorite of Tersina's because of the difficulty. She simply kept working and became a student of it, according



JUMPIN: Senior Daria Tersina makes her triple jump attempt during the 2021 season. "She is a person that works all year long for track. It is something that is very important to her," said Lance Burmeister (photo courtesy of Daria Tersina)

to Weis.

Not only is Tersina a great athlete, she is also a great leader.

She would describe her leadership style as leading by example.

"Tersina offers her suggestions to the younger girls and the girls

will do it the way [she] explained it to them," Weis said.

Tersina has one piece of advice from her years in the program to give to younger athletes:

"Keep pursuing your dreams and work hard to get them," Tersina said. **P**