

Clear your head. Move your toes. Coach Taylor Spring's words raced through senior Abi Contreras's mind. At the Blue Valley Southwest Timberwolves Extreme, there were three more two-minute periods left in the match – the only things separating Contreras from her first gold medal.

During varsity wrestling practices, the girls usually spent two hours on the mat and one hour in the weights room. 15 minutes were spent on warm-ups, followed by 30 minutes to learn technique, then 45 minutes of wrestling each other in a practice match to end practice.

During practice matches, to replicate how they wrestled in a meet, they needed to wrestle someone around their weight. Which meant sometimes they had to wrestle the boys' team.

"I've practiced a lot with [sophomore] Caleb Roberts," Contreras said. "And don't get me

wrong, he was great, but I never felt like he was going full out with me."

Unlike the guys who held back their takedowns and headlocks in fear of hurting the girls, Spring was not afraid to wrestle with the girls. During practice matches, she pointed out their errors and helped perfect their technique.

"Spring helps a lot, especially with the newer girls," sophomore Charli Ralston said. "We all like her and she is a good practice partner."

Soon, the wins started to add up – meets were going smoother and the girls were bringing home more medals than ever before.

After wrestling for six minutes, Contreras's sore arm was raised in the air, declaring her the winner of the match.

Spring walked with Contreras during her

cool down and unlike their past coach, Spring skipped over the celebrations. She explained that in future matches, it would be beneficial if she threw in an under-hook to finish her opponent off.

Thirty minutes later, the team surrounded the podiums. It was time for the judges to announce the winners – based on the amount of pins and points from that day – and to see if Spring's new coaching style had helped Contreras win.

And it did – she won first place.

With another medal added to SM East's collection, Spring had now helped coach the girls' wrestling team to win eight out of the ten medals the team had ever received, officially making school history for girls' wrestling.

BREAKING BARRIERS

SMEAST'S FIRST FEMALE WRESTLING COACH HELPED THE GIRLS WRESTLING TEAM REACH NEW HEIGHTS FOR THE FIRST TIME



OVER PREPARED Using all his strength, senior Grey Robinson pins his opponent against the wrestling mat. "He started trying to roll off his back, so his elbow got jammed between my face," Robinson said. "He was a sophomore who I had wrestled before and I knew I was better than him." *photo by Maggie Wells*



SQUAD UP *left* At the end of wrestling practice, sophomore Parker Ramirez attempts to score in matt ball. "It's like, football, but once you catch the ball you kind of stay still in place," Ramirez said. "[It helps] team building too. We gotta work together. You can't score on your own, and this helps you score." *photo by LJ Morrissey*

CHILLING OUT *below* At his meet against Olathe North, freshman Wade Lutes feels more confident than as he has been at previous meets. "I get a little bit nervous like at the first one," Lutes said. "but then the rest were fine." *photo by LJ Morrissey*



BATTLE IT OUT *bottom left* Blood splattered across his face and forearm, freshman Rehan Zahid fights to maintain winning position over his opponent at a district wrestling meet. When the referee noticed the blood, the match was paused. Zahid lost his advantage and was defeated. "He smashed my nose," Zahid said. "I didn't say anything cause I was in a winning position. I was about to pin him and then they called blood." *photo by Maggie Wells*

NEW CHAMP *below* After winning his first match, freshman Vincent Jamison chats with friend and teammate Nick. "[My favorite thing] was getting my first win, it felt really good," Jamison said. "I've got some friends that [wrestle], and I also have some friends that I've made." *photo by Morgan Beedle*

“ My favorite flashy move is probably the Spladl because you're making a guy do the splits while pinning him, and that's just funny to do in front of everyone. ”

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WHAT'S THE MOVE?

JUNIOR JOHN GAGEN DISCUSSES HIS FAVORITE MOVE



“ DOES YOU OR ANYONE YOU KNOW HAVE CAULIFLOWER EAR? ”
"No people on our team have Cauliflower Ears, but I know some people's parents who wrestled who have it."
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