

Not having a right hand doesn't stop Greater Lowell Tech wrestler Xavienh Quinones



Greater Lowell Tech sophomore wrestler Xavienh Quinones was born without a right hand. He doesn't let his disability stop him from excelling in any sport he tries, however. The Tyngsboro resident is a wrestling standout. (James Thomas photo)

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TYNGSBORO – There's just no stopping Xavienh Quinones.

Born with amniotic band syndrome, which happens when fibrous bands of the amniotic sac get tangled around a developing fetus, Quinones doesn't have a right hand. Despite his disability, he hasn't let anything stand in his way.

Growing up in Lowell before moving to Tyngsboro, the Greater Lowell Tech sophomore played different sports as a kid. His father, Angel, taught him how to shoot a basketball and hit a volleyball one-handed.

Once he arrived at the high school, he took on even bigger challenges. He played on the freshman football team as a wide receiver and has worked his way into becoming a defensive back.

Playing on the gridiron got the attention of assistant wrestling coach Mike Gregory, who urged Quinones to attend a practice. Eighteen months later, Quinones has 13 varsity wins in the 113-pound weight class.

"Wrestling at first took a lot to get used to. I felt like I couldn't do it. I did track before when I was in the eighth grade and I was pretty good in the hurdles so I figured I would just stick to that," said Quinones. "Coach Gregory then said to try wrestling, ride it through so I took his advice and I'm here loving this. Getting used to it took a while – it took me pretty much my whole freshman year. I usually stay in neutral and try to level change. I really can't get into hand fights, but it's easier to stay in neutral and use my speed."

Quinones wrestled on the JV team until he earned a varsity spot this season. That certainly was a milestone in his life, and shortly after another milestone came.

"After that first win, I felt like I was finally equal with everyone else and I could compete with everyone else," he said. "At first I didn't think I'd be able to do compete

and I used my hand as an excuse but coach Gregory just helped build (up my confidence) throughout.

“My parents have always told me to keep trying and keep trying to do different stuff,” he continued. “With wrestling, I don’t have to rely on anybody. It’s all based on me and how much work I put in. These coaches just teach me so much and obviously with my hand, they just give me so many opportunities and show me different ways to do things.”

Xavienh said that it really wasn’t until he started attending school that he realized he had a disability.

“My parents told me about it when I was a kid and just really opened my eyes to it,” he said. “Some people treated me different at first but I didn’t let it bother me. I just wanted people to accept me for who I am. It was a tough adjustment at first and a little uncomfortable, but after a while I started making some really good friends and they helped me out with (the mental aspect of it).”

That incredible mental toughness has stayed with him in track, on the football field and on the wrestling mat.

“Xavienh is very coachable, he listens and he wants to learn,” said Greater Lowell wrestling coach Tom Cassidy. “He’s very adaptable and most matches that he has, he goes the distance. He’s good on his feet and likes to get his takedowns. We’ll teach him some moves and sometimes he can’t do it, but he makes adjustments. It’s very hard for him to ride while on top, so we’ll cut him loose and let him wrestle on his feet and he’s really good there.

“It’s very difficult to do what he’s doing but he does very well with it. He works on certain moves that he can do, and knows when to bail out on stuff that he can’t do. When that happens, he’ll give his opponent a point, and will get back on his feet and try for another takedown,” he added.

Despite the obstacles he faces on the wrestling mat, Quinones said it’ll never stop him. He has big goals for his wrestling career, which started with Saturday’s Division 1 sectional meet.

“When I started winning some matches, I didn’t think about my hand,” he said. “I just saw myself as everybody else. I still think about that. It just feels really good that all my hard work (has paid off). These coaches have given me workouts and have helped me out the entire way. I’m just so grateful for all of their help.”



Greater Lowell Tech sophomore Xavienh Quinones, left, works out with a teammate during a recent wrestling practice. He excels at the sport despite being born without a right hand. (James Thomas photo)