

BLAIR WRESTLING

December 2022/January 2023 Newsletter

Dear Friends of Blair Wrestling,

Happy New Year! I'm sorry I am a little delayed on getting this out. It has been a great start to the season for Blair Wrestling. December was full of exciting competitions, which included the Battle of Germantown, Walsh Jesuit Ironman, Robin Leff Tournament, Journeymen National High School Showcase Duals and the Sam Cali Invitational.

As a team we have won each event, and I've been very proud of the total group effort so far this year. We have some major tests and challenges that lie ahead, and I'm interested and excited to see how the group will approach each and every one. Overall, we have already learned a lot this season in many different aspects, and I can only expect the growth to continue.

For this newsletter, in the spirit of the new year, I'd like to talk about some of the lessons and experiences we have shared and the areas we want to focus on in the days ahead. The main focus that I want to stress is TEAM. Giving some insight into this will help you understand the athletes, and Blair Wrestling, a little bit better.

Team is everything. We talk about the team and fighting for something greater than ourselves on almost a daily basis. The goal and effort to fight for each other is an important step in creating the right culture, and while we still have a ways to go, I think there have been some key examples of wrestlers stepping up for their team.

The first is junior **Josh Anthony '24**, who stepped up in a huge way at the Journeymen Showcase in New Orleans. Josh wrestles at 215 pounds, and the improvements he has made are evident, but we wrestled a very challenging Lake Highland Prep team where the dual meet came down to the last few matches. Josh's opponent from Lake Highland was big and strong. Josh came out on fire and pinned his opponent. While the pin was important for the win, the energy and attitude that Josh brought to the mat was felt throughout the whole bench. It carried over to the next

two matches where I firmly believe we wrestled with much better effort and energy because of Josh's tenacity, and I think the rest of the team would agree.

Attitudes can change instantly, and moods can change instantly. The team learned you can change your attitude and approach, but you must be intentional and do so with a purpose. Josh showed a lot about his character and effort in this situation, and he also showed the team that energy and intensity can quickly be changed for the better. Josh is a great athlete and is going to have a bright future.

The second situation I'd like to talk about, which is similar to the last, is on building momentum. Junior **Paul Ognissanti '24** is wrestling at 157 pounds this year, and he has been truly enjoying his experience. If you remember, he was 138 pounds last year and cut a lot of weight. This year, he has focused on getting stronger and bigger, and it has paid off.



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Paul is a highly-credentialed athlete, and he had a tough loss against a very scrappy Lake Highland Prep opponent. Paul takes losses hard because he cares so much. The beauty of dual meet tournaments is that you have multiple duals immediately following the next one. Paul had one of Malvern Prep's best wrestlers in the next match, and it became a critical one in order for us to pull out on top. Paul used baseline defense and stepped over his opponent with hips and pinned. Again, it wasn't that he pinned his opponent, it was that he brought great energy and excitement to the match. This propelled the team and boosted them up for the remainder of the dual meet. We had a lot of fun winning this dual—much more fun than the Lake Highland dual.

In both situations, I attribute these changes in energy to how people react to adversity and situations. Josh and Paul put the team on their backs in these two specific situations. There have been many other situations where athletes have stood out, but I wanted to focus on those two in particular.

As we move forward, I'd like to invite everyone to the Wyoming Seminary match that will take place at Blair at 7 p.m. on Friday, January 20. We will have a social at 5:30 p.m. one hour prior to the event in Tracy Hall, which is right next to the performance gym where the match will take place. All are welcome. If planning to attend, please RSVP to Courtney Stanford at stanfc@blair.edu.

Any and all support for Blair Wrestling is always appreciated. Our biggest expenses are lodging and traveling. We have some great trips planned for the winter, spring and summer, and we are growing our women's program as well. If you have any interest in supporting a trip or the program, please let me know.

Thank you everyone for all of your support and care for Blair Wrestling.

Hope to see many of you on January 20.

*Best,
Coach Gitomer*



BLAIR ACADEMY

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