

# BLAIR

## WRESTLING

### January 2026 Newsletter

#### *Dear Friends of Blair Wrestling,*

The team was busy over the holiday break competing at the Beast of the East and Powerade tournaments in Delaware and western Pennsylvania, respectively. The team continues to improve and gel each week, and I am very pleased with the collective efforts of our wrestlers. Along with the Ironman, our December included three of the toughest high school tournaments in the country. Read on for some highlights.

#### **Beast of East**

We had an impressive tournament at the Beast, finishing in first place ahead of Lake Highland Prep and Malvern Prep. We had seven place winners, including Vin Anello '27 (1st), Mikey Batista '27 (2nd), Salah Tsarni '27 (2nd), Cael Mielnik '27 (3rd), Weston Borgers '28 (3rd), Finnegan O'Brien '28 (4th) and Jack Anello '29 (4th). We would not have won the tournament without all the points our wrestlers earned in the consolation rounds. Everyone kept wrestling the entire tournament. It was great to see athletes like Vedwin Nivas '28 and Anthony Curlo '28 fill in at different weights and score team points that contributed to a team victory.

#### **Individual Highlights**

Mikey Batista rolled to the finals, ultimately losing 5-2 to Landin Sidun, the No. 1 ranked wrestler in the country. Sidun is a physical wrestler and is technically sound. I thought Mikey battled against him, and this loss will make him better.

Finnegan O'Brien, after dealing with a tough situation at the Ironman, came into this tournament a little banged up. Though not at his best physically, I was most proud of the way he battled each match to take fourth place. Finn is definitely learning what it means to be part of a team, and I think he thrives on it.

Vin Anello captured his first Beast title and showed gritty mat wrestling on his way to the podium. His semifinals and finals were won on the mat. Vin definitely knows he wants to open up more on his feet so that the matches aren't always coming down to one-point margins.

Benji Koch '26 battled really hard throughout the Beast tournament, winning some clutch matches, and showed admirable grit. Benji scored key bonus points on the back side to allow the team to win the team title. Benji is emerging as a leader of this team. His round of 12 match was extremely close against a top wrestler from New Jersey.

Cael Mielnik battled his way to third place, winning the match with an awesome finish! He avenged an earlier loss from Ironman by pinning his opponent in the third period after being down late in the match. Cael is really starting to hit his stride!

#### **Powerade**

This was another impressive showing as we went into the tournament with six of our starters out. Even with that and because of the effort of our entire team, we were able to finish third, behind Lake Highland Prep and Malvern Prep. We had six place winners, including Salah Tsarni (1st), Weston Borgers (2nd), Cael Mielnik (3rd), Ryan Rios '26 (6th), Wyatt Stauffer '28 (7th) and Joe Schinder '27 (8th). I am very pleased with the depth and fight of this team.

#### **Individual Highlights**

Ryan Rios had a breakout tournament, knocking off two top-10 wrestlers in the country on the front side of the tournament. Ryan is a very talented athlete who came to Blair last year with high expectations for himself. After missing

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time for a few years because of injuries, he is really starting to hit his stride now, understanding that consistency, focus and relationships are the key to success. Coach Tyler Thurgood '05 has been a great mentor for Ryan, and so it has been cool to see that relationship grow. You will see Ryan continue to improve each week.

Weston Borgers has had two breakout tournaments in a row, finishing second after his third-place finish at Beast of the East. Weston knocked off two top athletes in the country on his way to the finals. His finals match was tough because he wrestled an unorthodox opponent from Malvern, whom he will see again. Weston continues to grow into his body, and his best days are still ahead of him.

Wyatt Stauffer took seventh place at 121 pounds and had some gritty wins, especially on the mat. New to Blair, Wyatt is extremely focused and tough. You will continue to see him make gains, and he's always ready to compete and train. Even though he lost in the quarterfinal round, he stuck to the plan really well against the St. Joseph Regional wrestler.

Joe Schinder took eighth at Powerade. For anyone who knows Joe, he has been through injuries over the years. For Joe to get on the podium here is a step in the right direction. Joe is disciplined and focused, and he will continue to make improvements each week. He is learning to navigate through challenges and he's also learning to simplify his wrestling and eliminate distractions.

Salah Tsarni won the Powerade Tournament, dominating an opponent from Notre Dame Green Pond whom he lost to twice this year. He has been focusing on his bottom work this past week, and his wrestling is starting to really open up in all positions. He is a special kid whose mat and body awareness is at an elite level. It was great to see Salah come out with his first big tournament win!

Luke Hosonitz '28 won two big matches in the tournament at 107 pounds. Luke, an awesome wrestler, stepped in

immediately when asked. Luke gets challenged each day in the room, and for him to come to a tournament like Powerade and earn two pins is a big deal.

## One More Highlight

Vedwin Nivas traveled to the Bethlehem Christmas tournament and won the whole event in dominating fashion. In addition to growing into his body, Vedwin is starting to really love wrestling and learning. He is working on wrestling in a way that he's proud of and that involves scoring points. You will see Vedwin continue to grow and evolve.

## Closing Thoughts

I feel very confident about this group of kids. They are hungry, and each week you will see the team improve. We now enter the second half of the year and we will resume competition on January 10 at Blair against high level competition in Lake Highland, St. Edward and St. Christopher's. I hope you can all make it! We'll then compete at the Escape the Rock tournament in Holland, Pennsylvania, followed by some dual meets with the very best in the country. Our guys love the challenge.



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### Important Info for the January 10 Quad from the Blair Community:

Kick off the new year strong and mark your calendar for Saturday, January 10, 2026—Blair will be hosting a Quad. Before the matches begin, join us for some “Takedown Treats”—quick breakfast bites at Blair wrestling’s morning reception. Fuel up, cheer on the team and start the day right! We look forward to celebrating together with alumni, current parents, past parents and friends of the wrestling program. Registration is required for the reception.

### Details

Event: Blair Wrestling Morning Reception

Date: Saturday, January 10, 2026

Location: Center for Health and Well-Being

Time: 10:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Dress code: Casual—wear your Blair gear!

Quad begins at 12:00 p.m. in the Performance Gym

### Match Times:

12:00 p.m. Blair vs. St. Christopher’s School

2:00 p.m. Blair vs. St. Edward High School

4:00 p.m. Blair vs. Lake Highland Preparatory

Register today: [www.blair.edu/wrestling-reception](http://www.blair.edu/wrestling-reception).

### Special Note About the Wrestling Endowment

Blair Academy’s esteemed wrestling program, with a legacy dating back to 1919, has established the Blair Academy Wrestling Endowment. This initiative is designed to preserve the program’s tradition of excellence while addressing the evolving needs of today’s student-athletes. We invite you to support Blair wrestling by contributing to this important effort! Join us in sustaining this proud legacy: [www.blair.edu/supportwrestling](http://www.blair.edu/supportwrestling).

Best,  
Ross Gitomer



**BLAIR ACADEMY**

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