

# BLAIR



## WRESTLING

### January 2026 Newsletter

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

It was another exciting weekend at Escape the Rock in Holland, Pennsylvania. Unfortunately, the second day of wrestling was canceled due to weather conditions. As a result, the tournament had to finish in one day, and any wrestlers who did not make the quarterfinals were eliminated and could not wrestle back for placement. We ended up taking second at this tournament to Lake Highland Prep.

#### **Highlights**

Jack Anello '29 made a jump this tournament, avenging a loss to the Malvern Prep wrestler in the semifinals, and then falling short in the finals. Jack made some important adjustments this past week, improving his movement from tie to tie and his hand usage offensively and defensively. Jack has battled some injuries, so to see him work through the challenges of injuries has been great.

Mikey Batista '27 had a lot of fun throughout the tournament. Like Jack, he made some nice adjustments this past week on his hands in ties. He showed some strong rides on top as well, and Mikey is learning to dominate and separate himself from the field. He is as talented as they come.

Barry Norman '26 made the finals, where he fell in ultimate rideout in his final match. In the semifinals, he beat the same Lake Highland opponent again, this time securing the win in the ultimate rideout. Barry continues to improve, and he is also learning to be stingy and win close matches. The sky is the limit for Barry, and it'll be interesting to see if he wants to make another jump over the next few weeks.

Salah Tsarni '27 continues to dominate top-tier competition, beating a world team member from Howell, New Jersey, again. This time however, the score was 13-2. His attack rate is high and his ability to flow from position to position has been incredibly fun to watch. However, the reason he is making jumps is because he believes in the system and his goal is to maximize this system, not just win and lose. Salah is emerging as a leader on the team.

Cael Mielnik '27 had an incredible finals match, losing 13-12 to the St. Joseph's wrestler. Cael won in the semifinals because of a midmatch adjustment from the bottom position. He hit a nice reversal against the Malvern Prep athlete. Cael is wrestling heavyweight, so there are some areas that have to be addressed, especially when the opponent is a full 285 pounds. Cael hit a clean outside step shot into a shot-recovery transition to put his opponent on his back. Unfortunately, the opponent yelled for injury time during near-fall points. We were in a turk position. It is a credit to the kid for coming back with a lot of heart. There were a lot of emotions at play here, but it was a great learning experience for Cael.

#### **Final Thoughts**

It is that time of year where we are seeing familiar opponents, and we are around one another a lot. The situation that occurred at Escape the Rock, with the second day being canceled, understandably upset many of the guys who were not allowed to wrestle back, and I think the sudden change caused emotions to run high across the team. As a result, we lost some composure in our matches, and I include myself in that. That is not okay, especially as the coach of the team. We pride our team on having class,

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staying focused and doing things the right way. Letting frustration take over is a mental mistake and a break in discipline, and we must work hard to not let emotions get the best of us. We talked as a team for a while late Saturday evening, and many of the athletes shared their thoughts about what we learned and adjustments we need to make. Our staff is incredibly fortunate to be around these amazing kids and families, so we get to work again this week for improvement in all areas.

### What Lies Ahead

Friday evening: Away at St. Peter's Prep at 6 p.m.

Saturday afternoon: Home vs. Green Farms Academy at 1 p.m. (Senior Day)

Best,

Ross Gitomer



**BLAIR ACADEMY**

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