

Drama on the mat

I think Casey summed up an entire season when he told me he had the slogan for next years t-shirt.

Williamston Wrestling.....Bringing Drama to the Mat.

That really says a lot about this team and this season. We've got dashing leading men, a couple of comics, a love interest or two in the stands, a whole bunch of character actors, a wonderful crew directing the action, and we always seem to draw the best crowd to see the show. And what a show it's been. There have definitely been moments of great drama, and others when it was hard to tell if was a comedy or a tragedy. But when we finally neared the end there were a couple of great twists in the plot that made for a bit of a surprise ending.

This years shirt said "Driven to Dominate" and there was more than one moment when I thought I had made a real mistake choosing that phrase. It seemed only times we were driven was when we were on the school bus riding home from another loss, but I always knew it was there it just took us awhile to find it. And we found it on that second trip to Portland. What a night, I will never forget the look on the faces of those boys from Portland, it was priceless. Then we carried it on to Alma and almost got to make the big trip again. Now going into next year you all know what that feels like, you found your hearts. So over the next 8 months remember that feeling and build it into the force that takes us back to Battle Creek where I know we belong and we will have drama on the mat.

Now it's time to thank the people that made the drama of this season possible:

First we should be grateful to all of our fans that follow us where ever we go. The people who aren't your parents, the ones who don't have any obligation to be there. They come because they love wrestling and they love this team. We also need to thank the people who aren't always there but always make sure they know what we have done, whether they read it in the newspaper, make sure they ask you about it, or check in at WilliamstonWrestling.com. There are over 100 people on our e-mail list now all over the country, from Florida to Texas and on to California. Our web site has received over 4000

hits this season. People want to know about Williamston Wrestling.

Second you need to thank your parents. From the miles of driving, the hours and hours of sitting, pounds pasta salad and bushels of bagels, they are always there. Rides home from practice, working at the Classic, and tolerating you when you're cutting weight and tend to be a little cranky, they are always there. When you win and especially when you lose, they are always there. So before you go to bed tonight make sure to give your folks a hug because if they weren't always there you probably wouldn't be here.

Next you need to thank the crew that helps put this drama together. People like Miss Vant who does anything we ask of her, Mr. Monette the voice of Williamston Wrestling, Cliff Hawkins, our trainer, for applying pounds of ice and miles tape, Mr Lynch who went beyond the call of duty making sure the season ran smoothly, Dave and Jesse sharing their photos with us, the girls who put it on video tape and a whole lot of people who did what needed to be done to make sure this team had what it needed to be competitors. All of those people deserve a hug too.

Then you need to thank the producers and directors of this drama, your coaches. Mr. Bloom and Mr. Simmons give freely of their time, their resources, and their knowledge. Max your boundless enthusiasm is infectious. And Louie, I know this season had you more than a little frustrated at times. It had to have been hard to step in after the great run of our previous Director. Coach Mooney left you with some big shoes to fill, but in a lot of ways you didn't try and fill those shoes, you got a new pair for yourself. You may still be getting them broken in but everyone knows they're yours. District Champions, Regional Runner-up, 2 All-State Wrestlers, and 3 Individual Champions. Not too bad for your freshman season. Thank you for letting me be a part of your staff.

Finally the rest of us need to thank you guys, the players in our little drama. For a few of you wrestling was a new game, and for some it was your first year at this level and while it may not have always shown in the win-loss column you made it through a season in one of the toughest rooms there is and by all accounts you are ready to do it again and next time there will be a larger number under that W, both as a team and as individuals. Fully half of this team were either freshmen or first year wrestlers and we were just one match away from a trip to Kellogg Arena. Not a bad way to finish the team

season. I know also some of the returning wrestlers had a tough year but in the true fashion of great competitors it just helped focus your resolve to step to the next level. So to you the supporting cast, you have all of our thanks and our attention because you will be the stars of our show in the years to come.

And speaking of stars we have six guys who fall into the leading man category. Devin, a trip to the Finals as a freshman is a pretty big deal, it made us all proud. Kevin and Mike, a trip to the podium and all-state honors should be enough to propel you both to the top step next year. Casey you have provided some of the most vivid images that I remember about this season. From the look on your face when you got cradled at The Duals and when you had your nap in Alma, to watching you show Perrin and Froese what it's like to wrestle the next State Champion, but my favorite moment of the year was watching your Dad come down that row of seats stepping on anything in his way so he could share his pride with the rest of us, what a moment. When you looked around the medal stands in all of middle weights there were a lot of familiar faces that might have gotten the best of you, but that day not one of them were standing any higher than you were.

Now that just leaves two guys for me to talk about but before we get to them I want to express my thanks to all of you guys on this team. You know that I have more than a little bit of interest in the sport and from November through March it is the center of my world. I have a tendency to put it in front of most of the other things in my life and I want to thank you all for making me feel like a welcome part of the team. I brought music in as a part of our traditions this year and I chose the songs I played with great care. I wanted to set the right atmosphere for you guys and the people who support you. I used songs that you yourselves suggested, some I got from the people on M-Live, other I had heard in arenas around the country and I think they all had a positive message. Then when the match was over I played the same three every time. We heard John Mellencamp sing about that Small Town and it sure sounds like the place where you're growing up, and it's nights like this that make me glad we live in such a small town. Then the Boss sang about the "Glory Days", no matter where you go in life you always find some way to stay connected with the friend of your youth and eventually those meetings end up talking about those time you had together. And lastly Green Day reminded us about the Time of Your Life. In a life made up of moments we have shared some great ones together. So when you want to think about

glory days growing up in a small town just pop this CD-ROM full of mp3s into your computer and listen to all of the music and come back to this time and place and remember some of the times of your lives.

So now I'll get back to this drama we've been talking about. This has definitely been an Action/Adventure story and to be a good one you have to have a couple of heros. I think we found ourselves two. We have had the privilege of being an eyewitness to history over the past four years and it has been nothing short of amazing. In the community of wrestling people seem to talk about a lot of guys in multiples. You hear about Tom & Terry, John & Pat, Cole, Cody, & Cael. They are all brothers, The Brands, The Smiths, The Sandersons the list could go on and it is about to include another pair of names, Nick & Andy.

Now Andy by the misfortune of your birth order you will rarely be the first brother that people talk about but rest assured you will never, ever be overlooked. While this story I'm about to tell is mostly about Nick, Nick would not be who he is without you and you would be a different person without him. Maybe that is why there are so many brothers on the mat and why the mat creates a brotherhood of those who play the game.

Andy you provided us with a truly stellar season bringing home a still perfect record and your third State Title. In any other room a record of 162-0 would be unmatched, however this isn't just any room so hang in until next year and I'll tell a story that's really about you.

Now bear with me while I finish our story, I have what my friend calls a case of the overs. That's the feeling you have when you have been thorough something really great and then you realize that it's over and you don't want it to be over. Thank goodness that this is just the end of the first act and we will have a couple more that promise to be as good as the first.

I don't really remember the first time I met the boys but I'm sure it was somewhere near a wrestling mat, a couple of little blondes who called me Mr. Johnson. Soon after that they had moved back to Williamston where Scott thought they would be with the right people to guide them through their youth. Aren't we glad that he had that kind of an image of Williamston, I hope we have lived up to his expectations. As there little boys grew I stopped being

Mr. Johnson and became Brad and we started to hear tales of their prowess on the mat. They always seemed to be bring home some kind of hardware from wherever they wrestled, Andy would be wearing his and sometimes Nick's, but if Andy wasn't wearing it Nick's was in his pocket where you couldn't see it. Andy would volunteer all kinds of information about the weekend's accomplishments and if you asked Nick all he'd say was "I wrestled pretty good." They were in elementary school and when they would come over to the high school they would give some of the lighter weights a real good go at practice. Then they moved on to middle school and were giving the varsity starters all they wanted, while just tearing it up in competition. By the time his eighth grade year was over Nick's match totals numbered in the thousands and he had won 21 national championships. The wrestling world knew all about Nick and Andy, but they wondered if they could make the step to the next level.

I don't think they took a step, I'm pretty sure it was a leap that placed them above nearly everyone else. Nick entered high school as the number 1 ranked wrestler at 103 pounds in all divisions. He had never wrestled a high school match and he was already picked to be the best. Well whoever those folks were that did the rankings had it right, he has always been the best and he has always been number 1.

Nick's first match was in a double dual against Mason and Dansville, and some poor soul got pinned and became the person who started one of the greatest streaks in sports history. That streak lasted four years and 211 matches. He only went the distance 3 times, he rarely saw the second period. I think Coach Minkle really put it in perspective when he said it's like going to bat 211 times and hitting 208 home runs and three triples. I'm willing to wager that in his entire high school career Nick spent less than 2 hours in competition out of more than 21 possible hours. Compare that to the number of hours he spent in training and you'll see what it takes to be a truly incredible athlete. Compare that to the hours we have spent in bleacher seats and you will see what it takes to be a truly great fan. And then by getting pinned at 2:56, Ryan Bullock of Capac became the final victim of the most dominate wrestler in high school history in the final match of his high school career.

Michigan's first undefeated four time state champion, holder of 10 national records, numerous Michigan records, three time undefeated junior national

champion and on and on. Truly the makings for the greatest athlete to ever walk the halls of Williamston. Now when the rest of you get old and start telling stories about back in the day, you can tell about what it was like to be on the team lead by Nick Simmons, the hero of our little drama.

Nick watching you wrestle has been nothing but a pleasure, and maybe more importantly knowing you and watching you grow into such a great person has also been a joy. We look forward to following you as a Spartan and then as an Olympian. And I'm sure that somewhere in the future you will be a great coach and a great dad. The Free Press said you and Andy were "The Untouchables" well I don't know if that's entirely true. You have touched the heart of a whole community and we hope we have touched yours. Please come forward so I can make a couple of presentations.

Classic Plaque

Williamston Wrestling Club Plaque

Now as this act of our little drama draws to a close don't put our story away until next season, direct some of your efforts towards writing the next chapter cause I think it gonna be a good one.

Thank You!