

State wrestling champion caps off high school career

Written by By Molly Ann Howell Managing Editor
Friday, 08 March 2024 00:00



Four titles in four years for Miyamura High wrestler

Lorianna Piestewa grew up watching her dad and brother wrestle, and in an interview with the *Sun* she said they inspired her to get into the sport.

"Watching your role models growing up, you really want to be like them, so I got into wrestling," she said.

PATH TO WRESTLING

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Lorianna started wrestling in the eighth grade, and with 2024 Wrestling State Championships taking place on Feb. 23 and 24, she has officially finished her high school wrestling career. In her four years at Hiroshi Miyamura High School, Lorianna won the state champion title four times.

This time around Lorianna said her competition was tough, but she went out on the mat with a lot of confidence.

"The girls wrestled really well. I kind of just went out there trusting my training and how hard I've worked. So I went out there with a lot of confidence," she said.

She said all of her success comes from the support she receives.

"It took a lot of hard work, a lot of support from my family and the coaches, they really helped me out. It's hard working going out there every day giving it my best," she said.

Adam Piestewa, Lorianna's father, said his daughter's dedication is what makes her a winner. He explained that during the winter he barely sees Lorianna, because she wakes up at 3:30 am to go to the weight room, comes home to get ready for her work study program which goes from 7:30 am to 11 am, then she's off to school. Wrestling practice starts at 3:30 after school, and she stays behind after practice to help with the youth program. Adam said she usually gets home around 8:30 pm on weekdays.

"It's a lifestyle that she chose, and I'm hoping that it carries her a long, long way," the proud dad said.

Both Adam and Lorianna spoke about the mental and physical demands of wrestling, saying that it's not just about the time on the mat but also the time spent training and thinking.

"A lot of people think you just go out there for six minutes and six minutes isn't all that long, but

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really it's what you do in those six minutes that's really the hardest thing you could do, because you could be up by 10 points and then be put on your back and get pinned with 10 seconds left," Lorianna said of the sport.

After her successful high school career, Lorianna is planning on wrestling at Colorado Mesa University in Grand Junction University. She plans on studying exercise science whe she's not on the mat.

"When I went to visit [the college], it really felt like home," Lorianna said.

Miyamura wrestling coach Nate Sellers has been with Lorianna for all five years of her official wrestling career. He spoke about his working relationship with Lorianna, and what he hopes to see from her in the future.

"I give her advice daily, we're constantly in the room in-season, off-season. There is no out of season for us. Having her over the last six years, I think she knows what's expected and her capabilities. I'm looking forward to her wrestling at Colorado-Mason and making an impact at the college level," he said.

Sellers also had high praise for the star athlete.

"It's been great [coaching Lorianna]. She's one of those athletes you get every few years who just has a natural work ethic," he said.

THE HISTORY OF WOMEN'S WRESTLING

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Wrestling wasn't always an available opportunity for women athletes like Lorianna.

In 1989, Afsoon Roshanzamirwon the first World medal for USA Wrestling in the 1989 Summer Olympics. Roshanzamirwon was born in Iran, and grew up with her father teaching her wrestling. When the family moved to the U.S. in 1983, Roshanzamirwon went out for high school wrestling as a freshman, but she had to join the boys' team.

Six years later, Roshanzamirwon's high school wrestling coach David Chaid approached her about doing the U.S. Olympic trials. The wrestling portion of the trials was run by Lee Allen, a pioneer in women's wrestling.

The winners of the trial would go on to compete in the 1989 Olympics. It would be the first year the U.S. would have a women's freestyle wrestling team. Roshanzamirwon was placed on a five-woman team, and she ended up winning a bronze medal, becoming the first U.S. medalist at the Women's World Championships.

A year later, in 1990, the National Federation of State High School Association began tracking girls who participated in wrestling, and reported that were 112 girls competing on 102 teams nationwide. These girls were members of the boys' teams.

Kent Bailo founded the U.S. Girls Wrestling Association, an organization which ran all-girl high school folkstyle national tournaments, and a series of state or regional events leading up to an annual national championship, in 1997. For over two decades, the USGWA provided girls an opportunity to compete against other girls in folkstyle.

In 1998 Hawaii held the first official girls state high school wrestling competition.

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