

one pin at a TIME

SENIOR LEADS TEAM
TO DUAL TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP
IN TENNESSEE

by vivian rodriguez

All-conference wrestler Colby Sousa, a senior, stood on the mat at Elizabethton High School. The wrestling team had traveled to Tennessee in January for a dual team championship tournament. Sousa and his Christian Academy of Knoxville opponent in the 126 lb. weight class were the last to wrestle. They were tied 2-2 at the end of the first round. Sousa took a deep breath. If he could win the match, his team would win the tournament.

Early in the second round, Sousa's opponent tried to take him down, but Sousa, who had led his team all season with a 42-8 record, reversed him to the ground and pinned him, winning the championship for his excited teammates.

"This year and last year I won a lot more matches than I had before. My freshman and sophomore years I lost a lot of matches that I should have won, but I decided to start working out more and more," Sousa said. "I got stronger my junior year because I started lifting weights and becoming more aggressive. I started to work harder in practice to get where I needed to be."

Sousa's coach, social studies teacher Jon Hardman, said he was pleased with Sousa's senior season. "This season was the first time we won 20 matches two years in a row in a long time. We were a very young team, and we did very well. We over achieved what was expected of us," Hardman said.

Growing up surrounded by wrestlers, including his father and his uncles, Sousa fell in love with the sport of wrestling when he was in the first grade. "Senior year was my favorite year, mostly because it was my last year and I had to enjoy it," Sousa said. "I will miss making memories with my teammates, like the time (freshman) Cody (Shamburger) ordered four pizzas and ate them with cheese sticks all by himself. It was one of the most interesting things I've ever seen. I will also miss traveling and reuniting with the friends I've made from other high schools."

Sousa's teammate, freshman Dillan Higgins, will remember much about Sousa's senior season, including his win at Elizabethton. "At the team championship tournament, we were tied," Higgins said. "It was intense because everyone was screaming, cheering on both wrestlers. It was a good feeling because we all knew we could count on Colby to win. When he did, we all ran to him and cheered him on. It felt really good."

Sousa struggled with a shoulder injury during much of his season and had to change the way he did most of his moves to avoid putting too much pressure on his shoulder. He believed his injury affected some of his important matches. In spite of his injury, he won the team's award for most outstanding wrestler.

Higgins received the Terry Varnadore Courage and Leadership Award, named for a former wrestler who died in the war in Afghanistan. "It was an honor to win this award, but it was kind of a surprise. We were at our wrestling banquet and our coach was talking about the award and describing the characteristics of the person who was winning the award. I was very surprised when he said my name. I was one of the youngest and most inexperienced guys on the team," Higgins said.