

Herzberg wrestling with loss



(Chris Ammann/Baltimore Examiner)
Severna Park 130-pounder Matt Herzberg, top, works on a pinning combination during practice on Tuesday. Herzberg is the captain of the Falcons and is off to a 11-3 start this season.

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Current rank: *Not ranked*

SEVERNA PARK, Md. - Matt Herzberg is the type of wrestler that is every coach's dream.

Herzberg, a 130-pound senior captain of the Severna Park High wrestling team, is 11-3 on the season after placing third in the Damascus Tournament last week. Falcons coach Paul Joyce said Herzberg's work ethic is unquestioned and he has even had to keep him off the mat against his wishes because of injuries.

"Matt just goes about his business and has never been the type of wrestler who just wanted to seek attention for himself," Joyce said.

Herzberg learned how to conduct himself on and off the mat from watching his older brother, Eric. Matt modeled himself after Eric in many different ways and had even planned on joining the elder Herzberg in the Marines after graduating this spring.

Those plans changed Oct. 21 when Eric, a lieutenant corporal, was killed while conducting combat operations in Al Anbar Province, Iraq. The 2005 Severna Park graduate was 20 years old.

In the months since Eric's death, Matt has turned to wrestling as an escape for dealing with his grief. Matt's mother, Gina Barnhurst, said Eric was his best friend.

"Matt loves wrestling, and that is the one place where he can use any energy he has built up," Barnhurst said.

Barnhurst said she is proud not only of Eric, but of Matt and her eldest child, Katie, 22, for how they have handled such a difficult situation. She added that the closeness of their family and their deep Catholic faith has made dealing with Eric's death easier.

"I wanted Matt and Katie to know that they are as much heroes to me as Eric because they have sacrificed as much as anybody in order to protect the country," she said.

Herzberg said he is putting off any decision on joining the military now until he at least goes to community college for a few years. In the meantime, he is going to concentrate on winning an Anne Arundel County championship and placing in the Class 4A/3A state tournament.

"I'm really proud of my brother and will always remember him," Herzberg said. Winning a county title and placing in the states would just mean so much more now."

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