

New Jersey's Twin Towers

The Cabanillas brothers and RMN Events stars have sky-high goals

It's one thing to be twins. It's a whole different dynamic being twin wrestlers. As friends and foes have learned, Ricky and Nicky Cabanillas of New Jersey have forged a bond to the power of 1+1=3.

In Nicky's words, "When he (Ricky) loses, I feel it; when I win, he feels it."

To this day, Nicky is first and last by his side. At home, Ricky is Mr. Fix It — even assembling his own computer — while Nicky is the comedian. Both, according to their mother, Theresa, are "loving and caring."

For college, the twins from DePaul High School have committed to Brown, where each will pursue degrees in engineering, with Nicky studying mechanical design and Ricky interested in computer software.

As one of the top-rated 152-pounders in the country, Beast of the East and New Jersey state champion Ricky knows that "my dedication and hard work pay off on the mat. I train hard to get to where I am. I love getting into the practice room, strapping up my shoes, grabbing a partner and just scrapping."

A four-time New Jersey freestyle-Greco national team member along with Ricky, Nicky is a New Jersey state placer (fifth).

"Every time I enter the wrestling practice room, I put in 100 percent effort," the 132-pound twin said. "I love walking on the mat knowing I am going to give my opponent everything I have. If he beats me, he deserves it, because I was not going to give him anything."

The last time the twins weighed the same was at age 8. While Ricky is stronger and more technical, Nicky is quicker and more intuitive in his wrestling. Always there at matside, their dad Carlos has coached them throughout the past 12 years, while their mom is the team organizer and manager for Team New Jersey and the Scorpion National Team.

The Cabanillas family has traveled the past four years to Las Vegas to compete in the RMN-NUWAY Freak Show, where Ricky and Nicky were twin champions in 2016 and where Ricky earned his third consecutive crown in 2018.

"It's always nice to travel so far away and attend a well-organized event," the twins said. "You are always certain to get the best competition with RMN Events. We love the Freak Show — lots of mats, tough competition, big heavy medals, East Coast technique versus West Coast funk. If you haven't had a chance to participate in an RMN tournament, you're missing out!"

Ricky and Nicky give a shout out to Carlos Rodriguez, owner and coach of the

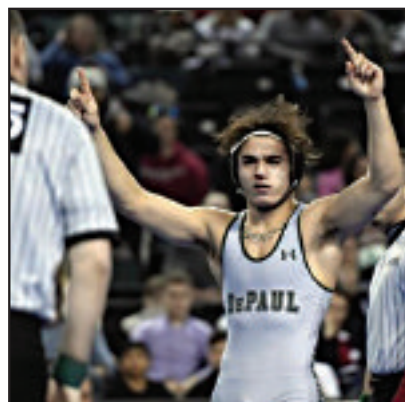
By Bill X Barron



Ricky (left) and Nick Cabanillas from New Jersey are twins, but have not wrestled at the same weight since they were eight years old.

Scorpions.

"Coach Rodriguez is an inspiration and a constant influence for us. He's the reason we are as good as we are," Nicky said.



Nicky Cabanillas (left), who wrestles at 132 pounds, and his twin brother, 152-pound Ricky, have both placed at the New Jersey state tournament for DePaul High School and will compete at Brown University.

"Carlos is a father figure who always believed in us," Ricky added. "He purposely put us against the best kids in the room. He pushed us until we could no longer move. A great man!"

The brothers got their start in middle school with Coach Pete Monteverdi.

"Coach Pete still supports us in everything we do," they said. "We owe a lot of our success to him."

The boys also appreciate the guidance they have received from DePaul Catholic High School coach Keith Karsen.

"A great coach, always has our backs and treats the team with respect," they said. "It's been an honor wrestling for him. After we graduate, we plan to come back every chance we get."

"The Cabanillas brothers are an example of true student-athletes," Karsen said. "Whether on the wrestling mat or in the classroom, they give everything they have. They are a great example for our younger wrestlers to look up to and model themselves after. It has been an honor to have them on our team. They will be greatly missed when they head off to Brown University next year."

Wrestling is embedded in the New Jersey culture. Its competitive balance "keeps you humble," states Ricky. "You can be nationally ranked but still lose to another New Jersey kid."

Nicky keeps his ego in check by "wrestling the kid, not the accolades or the singlet. Just wrestle! If I lose, I don't ponder on it; I study Mom's video, then work to perfect moves in practice."

In Ricky's perspective, "Whatever happens on the mat happens. All you can do is work to be mentally prepared. Afterward, I think about what I could have done differently to make sure it doesn't happen again."

To those just coming up through the ranks, Nicky advises: "Believe in yourself. Don't get discouraged. Everyone loses. Just keep competing at a higher level," Ricky tells young grapplers: "Keep with it, even when you get your butt kicked. Success will come. Face the best kids. Keep going to gain more experience."

Nicky thanks the sport of wrestling for "making me a hard-working person. Wrestling gave me the mindset to never give up, no matter what the situation. If you work hard in the room, and put in the time, results will show. Your work will help you become better at wrestling and in life."

Ricky enjoys the camaraderie.

"Wrestling brings everyone together like a whole community," he said. "It also brings my family closer." ■