

Northwestern's Deakin still credits his Colorado roots for his success

By Bill X Barron

Northwestern senior Ryan Deakin, who headed into the 2020 NCAA postseason as the nation's top-ranked wrestler at 157 pounds, espoused, "For me, wrestling is something I do, not who I am. I have learned to relieve the pressure, allowing me to compete free of stress. My self-worth is not based on whether I win or lose."

When he was just seven years old, Ryan's father Paul invited him to try wrestling, and immediately "I fell in love. I feel blessed to have started with the Legacy (Colo.) youth program and competed on national-level teams since the age of twelve."

"Later, I was mentored by so many, including Tommy and Danny Clum (Mile High Wrestling Club); Legacy High School coaches Mike Thompson, Chris Wessel, and Jonny Torres; Colorado Elite's Tony Schunke; and finally head coach Matt Storniolo with assistants, all high wrestling IQs, Robbie Smith, Andrew Howe, Jimmy Kennedy, and Joe Rau (Greco) here at Northwestern."

Early on and throughout his career, the Junior World Silver Medalist has exceeded expectations through his inquisitive, humble, and indefatigable learning attitude.

"To be the best," asserts Ryan, "you must have the humility to keep learning. Every wrestler has something they are good at. Pick his brain."

The Colorado four-time placer, three-time finalist and two-time state champion continues: "I have always wanted to learn as much as I could. Not only has it been important to know what works best for me, but I have also seen value in learning moves I don't use."

"You are never able to master everything, but I keep trying," high school coach Chris Wessel asserted, "Ryan loves to learn, always asking 'what if' questions about strategies, thriving on figuring things out. In everything he does, Ryan is incredibly dedicated."

"Ryan has risen to the top as a natural-born leader and he remains there as a learner; win or lose, he always looks in the mirror, asking himself what he can fix or do better with no excuses. You'd never know the outcome because he is so focused on getting back to the mat."

In addition to Ryan's great work ethic, the Northwestern economics major intensively studies film, swears by repetitive drilling, and prioritizes his faith while in

er for Athletes in Action.

"Being seen as a spiritual leader is a cool experience," he said. "For my teammates, it's another resource. Religion has always been important in my life, but now that I am in college, I have dived deeper into exploring my convictions."

Northwestern is not an easy place to balance being the best wrestler in the country with high-caliber academics.

"You cannot breeze through here," Deakin said. "Wrestling has taught me lessons which have helped me succeed in school: manage your time (weight), take advantage of office hours (drilling), and attend summer school (camp) to lighten the load during the season."

Competing for one of the smaller universities in the Big Ten, Deakin has been an important part of building them into a top-25 national power.

"To create a wrestling culture, we had to bring in the right kind of guys," he said. "It's exciting to see teammates have success. We're headed in an awesome direction."

At the same time, Ryan is "always rooting for any wrestler from Colorado to do well. Success has been a long time coming for the state. Growth has come about through all the high IQ coaches there."

Those who know Ryan Deakin recognize him as a student leader, top scholar, and an active citizen of the community. In 2016, his senior year in high school, he was recognized with Colorado's Dave Schultz Excellence Award.

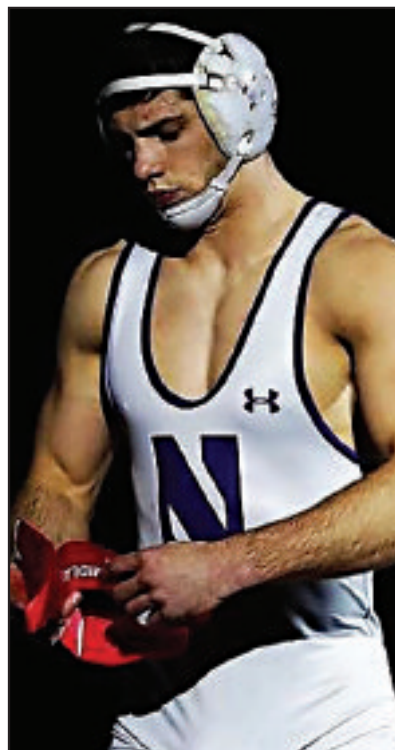
"I was raised to see the positive in everything," he said. "It's hard-wired in me."

One of Coach Wessel's favorite memories of Ryan is as a high school junior when the Legacy team participated in a University of Missouri summer camp.

"All he could talk about on the ride was wrestling with Alan Waters," Wessel said. "The match was fairly competitive until Waters got on top."

"Afterward, with a huge smile, Ryan said, 'You know, I truly can compete with him. All I need to do is finish my shot and get out from bottom.' That's how I knew, even then, that Ryan would eventually be No. 1 and perhaps an NCAA champion."

"Life is awesome," exulted Ryan. "You grow up really quickly in college, but I have learned to keep it all in perspective. It's hard work, but I continue to love the sport. Overall, I feel really lucky, truly blessed with my life." ■



(RMN Events photo)

Before Northwestern's Ryan Deakin earned All-American honors, the Colorado native wrestled for the Legacy youth program.

the pursuit of excellence.

"Everything, good or bad, happens for a reason," he philosophizes. "I am super thankful; wrestling has opened a lot of doors for me."

His key to success is "keeping your head down and shooting to do your best."

While young, Ryan embraced a long-term plan to reach the top. Now he recognizes that being the best comes with higher expectations.

"I'd much rather be the guy to beat," he said. "Every day, I put my best foot forward to get better in my positions and to focus on what I do best."

Every year growing up, Ryan would participate in up to five national RMN events, the tournament organization whose business is located in his hometown of Broomfield. States Ryan: "I loved competing against wrestlers from all over the country. During the high school winter break, the RMN's Who's Bad? Championship kept me sharp and focused."

Off the mat, Deakin is an active lead-

ANTHEM

WARRIOR

CHAMPIONSHIP

FOLKSTYLE
FREESTYLE
GRECO

APRIL
18-19

REGISTER TODAY

RMN
EVENTS

RMNEvents.com