

Senior trio represents the Hylanders

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360 seconds. Three two minute periods. A short six minutes that will determine victory or defeat. Qualifying for a state competition is no easy task. Seniors Manny Alvarez, Dylan Lentz and Edwin Pesantez managed to accomplish this in back to back years.

In preparation for the state tournament in March, the trio continued their strict training regime and pushed through physical injuries. Coaches continued to bolster their wrestlers' spirits.

"As a coaching staff, we wanted to ensure everyone's technique was as good as it could possibly be and their conditioning and strength were at peak levels. We structured practices with a lot of situational drills. Our goal was to make sure each wrestler was comfortable and confident in all aspects of their wrestling. We constantly reassured the wrestlers to believe in themselves, to trust the process and to believe in their training and preparation," head coach Mr. Alex Wong said.

The three wrestlers knew keeping calm and focusing on one match at a time would help them advance.

"It's hard going into the first match of play-offs. You know that a loss means your season is over, and for seniors, their career has ended," Alvarez said.

"Having been at state the previous year was a huge advantage mentally. Being comfortable lessens the intimidation factor of being at state," Wong said.

Knowing the physical set-up at the XCEL Energy Center also helps. The tunnels underneath the stands provide a space for athletes and coaches to separate from the buzz of fans. Not very spacious, the area is crowded with wrestlers warming up, talking with their coaches and recovering from hard matches. Seasoned competitors have learned how to deal with the situation.

"As soon as you leave the tunnel and take off your warm-up, your adrenaline tunes out all the fans and outside noise. Your instincts take over," Lentz said.

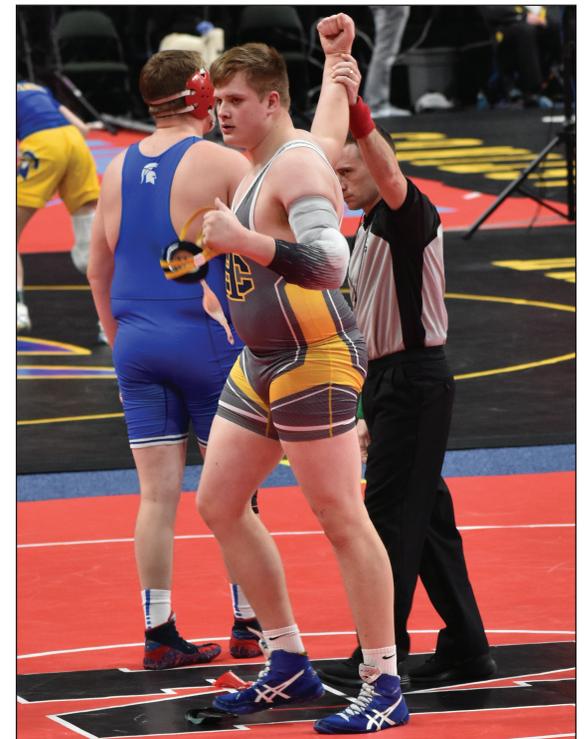
Then the moment arrives, and wrestlers face the biggest matches of their careers.

Wrestling at 113 pounds, Pesantez began the Hylander quest for a spot on the winners' podium. His season ended when Hibbing wrestler Francis Fuenfingler pinned him during the second period. Even so, he has no regrets.

"I gave it everything I could. I'm proud of qualifying for state two years in a row and grateful for the friends I made there," Pesantez said.

Lentz was up next, wrestling at 170 pounds. He pinned Mahtomedi wrestler Hunter Hall (11) in 67 seconds with an arm bar tilt pin. Then he lost his semi-final match to Detroit Lakes wrestler Isaiah Thompson (10) in a 1-5 decision. Lentz fought his way through the consolation bracket to secure a 5th place win in an overtime battle against Wyatt Martin (12) from Marshall.

"Overall, my season felt successful. I overcame



Alvarez defeats Luke Zaiser from Simley High School in his second round match of the state tournament.

a lot of obstacles which helped me finish strong in the end," Lentz said. "My final match was one of the most intense competitions that I have ever been in. I left everything out on the mat."

Alvarez finished off the night for Heights wrestling in the heavyweight division. After a hard loss to Chase Liestman (11) from Litchfield, he faced wrestlebacks. He won his third match against Zach Carlson (11) from Chisago Lakes with a pin in the first period. Alvarez was unable to compete in his final match due to injury restrictions. He was awarded with a respectable 6th place finish.

"Manny placing at state for the second consecutive season was an amazing accomplishment. Battling through injuries all tournament and being able to persevere and end up on the podium is a testament to what a competitive spirit he has," Wong said.

Pesantez and Lentz plan to wrestle in college. Both are considering Augsburg University in Minneapolis.

"Wrestling has always been a huge part of my life. It will stay that way even though my high school career is over. I plan to wrestle through college and eventually become a coach," Lentz said.

Alvarez will be attending St. Cloud State University where he has signed to play football.

All three leave behind great records and legacies for future Heights wrestlers.

"I couldn't be more proud of what these seniors have accomplished in their time here," Wong said.



Edwin Pesantez

Weight Class:
106 lbs.

Season Record:
22 - 6

Career Record:
42 - 10



Dylan Lentz

Weight Class:
170 lbs.

Season Record:
34 - 6

Career Record:
144 - 29



Manny Alvarez

Weight Class:
285 lbs.

Season Record:
33 - 4

Career Record:
126 - 42

The Tri-Metro Conference Outstanding Senior Wrestler of the 2018 season is Heights wrestler Dylan Lentz (12). Lentz was unanimously selected by all eight wrestling coaches in the conference.

Placing fifth in the State Class AA Division at 170 pounds, Lentz finished the 2018 season with 34 wins and a mere 6 losses. He holds the CHHS wrestling record for career wins with 144. Lentz, a four-time All-Conference award winner, three-time section champion and four-time All-Academic Award recipient, has led the Hylanders as a captain for the past three years.



Photos by Kira Greenfield

Lentz prepares to break down his opponent at the start of the third period.

