

Class B mat champ piles up the victories

By C.J. RISAK

Motivation. For a basketball player, the screaming crowds during tournament time can spark him. In high school football, the possibility of playing for the state championship in front of thousands of fans in the Pontiac Silverdome can whip a player into a frenzy.

But what keeps a wrestler going? There aren't too many fans, no notoriety, little attention. And yet, wrestlers put in as much work, maybe more, than any football or basketball player.

For Avondale's Juan Arellano, motivation is simple.

"You have to be in a good mood all the time," the senior grappler said. "If you're in a bad mood, things start to get to you. Practice, cutting weight, all these things can start to bother you."

"That's what Coach (Ray) Went helped me with the most. He said to do nice things for people and you'll be in a good mood all the time. So I do nice things for my mother, my sisters, I help the younger wrestlers during practice, because I remember when I was a freshman, I didn't get much help."

That may not be the only key to success, but it certainly has worked for Arellano. Two weeks ago, he captured the Class B state crown in the 119-pound weight class, and he did it the hard way, beating his top three toughest competitors in the class.

AND LAST WEEK, he proved his title was no fluke, as he whipped two Class A state champs to win the AAU Junior Olympics state championship in freestyle wrestling.

The top caliber of the competition wasn't Arellano's only problem last weekend. He had to wrestle seven matches during the day, which can leave almost anyone else exhausted. And his last match was against Tom Davids of Hazel Park, who won the 112-pound championship in the Class A finals.

Arellano proved to be more than a match for Davids, outlasting him by a 5-1 score. Earlier, he had beaten the 105-pound Class A champ, Mark Catling, by a 5-3 margin. All three were wrestling in the elite division of the 123-pound weight class.

Conditioning for such tournaments is obviously important, and Arellano keeps himself in good shape.

"I've been working out every day, since the beginning of the school year," he said. "I have a physical fitness class, in which we have to take a marine fitness test. It's real tough, with push-ups,

pull-ups, and a bunch of other exercises. I do that test a lot."

Arellano got started early in wrestling as an 11-year-old with the Rochester Falcons Club. At that age, he wrestled all freestyle (starting in the standing position, whereas, in high school, the beginning of the second and third periods always have one wrestler in an advantageous position).

"FREESTYLE WRESTLING IS more fun, because it isn't as serious as in high school. You don't have to worry about how the team is doing. It's all individual."

The biggest problem Arellano has is "cutting weight. Heavier guys have it easier, they have more to work with. But smaller guys really have it tough keeping their weight down, especially when they're 18 and still growing."

Arellano finished his prep career with a 34-3 mark. The most satisfying win of those 34 had to be the last one,

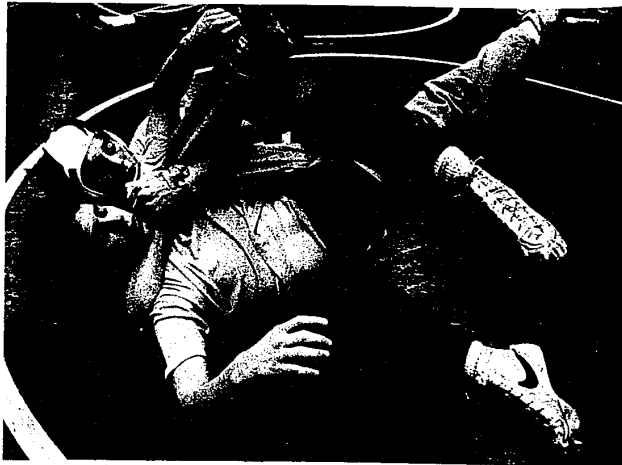
which not only gave him the state crown, but allowed him to avenge an earlier loss in the district finals. He beat Gary Adam of Warren Fitzgerald, 4-3, to win the state crown, after losing to Adam in overtime in the districts.

He finished his high school wrestling with a 92-30 record. His victory in the AAU Junior Olympics qualified him for a team that will tour Germany, on June 6-29.

His wrestling keeps him busy, allowing him little time for any other sport. He did play football for Avondale, but his main interest is wrestling, to which he "devotes a lot of time."

And it's the time spent during the week that Arellano feels has made him a state champion. After his trip to Germany, Arellano will be back and will have to make a decision on which college to attend.

"I'm not sure which one I'll go to. I haven't made up my mind. But I am staying in the state."



Helping a teammate with a new move, Avondale's Juan Arellano (with headgear) effectively makes his point. (Staff photo by Mibdy Saunders)

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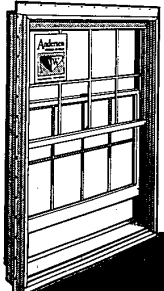
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