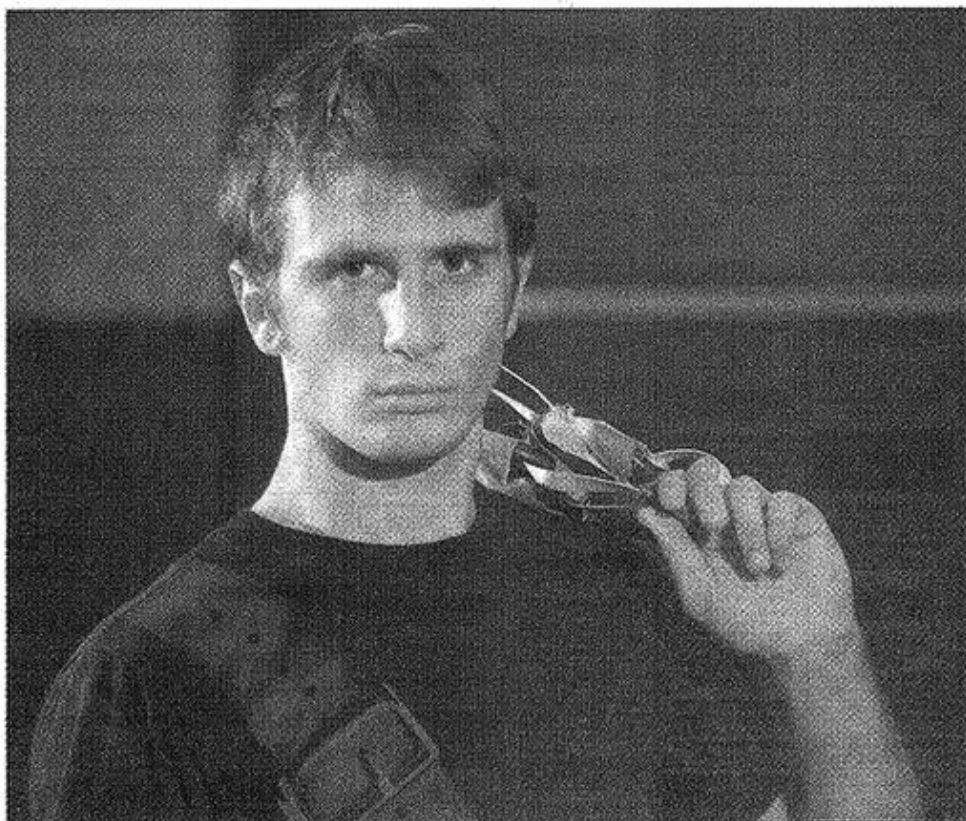


FOCUS ON: Manassas Park's Daniel McGillivray



Jeff Mantle/For the News & Messenger

Daniel McGillivray won a Group A title last year with two pins and an 18-0 tech fall in four matches.

A style all his own

By BRIAN HUNSICKER

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Daniel McGillivray arrived in Manassas Park's wrestling room about a year ago. His family moved from a small town in western New York, 90 miles from Buffalo; McGillivray had to adapt at the culture shock of having so many people in his class.

Never mind that in the spring, Manassas Park graduated 140 people — far less than a place like Forest Park, where its graduation was nearly four times larger.

That's how small Belmont, N.Y. is. McGillivray had 35 people in his class there.

"You'll laugh because a couple of schools wanted to merge with us," McGillivray said, "because they only had 12 kids graduating."

Wrestling, he said, eased the transition from small town to a bigger one. And he made an immediate impact, winning a state title on his first try as a sophomore.

At the Group A tournament, Cougars coach Ward Hugh said McGillivray didn't give a point during the entire Group A tournament. He scored first-period pins in his first two matches, notched an 18-0 tech fall in the semifinals and blanked Madison County's Aaron Darnell 5-0 in the finals.

Moreover, Hugh said the 152-pound class was among the toughest in Group A last year. McGillivray was one of three sophomores in the field; besides one

THE MCGILLIVRAY FILE

- Age: 17
- Year: Junior
- Weight Class: 152/160
- Family: Mother, Amia; father, Dennis; brothers, James, Mark, Sam and Dennis; sisters, Bethany and Hannah
- What to you is the best thing about wrestling? "It's got to be the winning. The adrenaline kicks in and the crowd is screaming your name."

freshman, the rest of the 16-man bracket was comprised of juniors and seniors.

"He had talked about bumping up to [160]," Hugh said. "But he was like, 'You think 52 is the tougher weight class?' I said, 'It's probably the top in the state, the toughest weight class,' with the number of returning state placers, kids coming back."

"And he said, 'Well, that's where I want to go.'"

Hugh said McGillivray's style is an unorthodox one. He's adept at scrambling and will use any move in his repertoire at any time, often times to the surprise of his opponents.

"Obviously I don't want to give away everything he can do," Hugh said, "but there are certain things he has and he does from his feet that kind of catches guys off guard."

McGillivray doesn't remember how he got started in wrestling, but does recall as a young boy his father coming home and broaching

the idea about going out for wrestling. McGillivray was excited to try it.

Once he got into the sport, he travelled often to tournaments in wrestling-mad Pennsylvania; Belmont is less than a 20-mile drive from the Pennsylvania border.

Though he had other adjustments to make — the larger school, trading in 32 acres of land in Belmont for more typical Northern Virginia housing — the wrestling remained largely the same.

In some ways, it got easier. To qualify for New York's state tournament, a wrestler must win their regional tournament; in Virginia, the top four regional placemen advance to states. But McGillivray said the extra cushion that comes with Virginia's postseason didn't come into his thinking — he wanted to win whether one spot or four spots advanced.

Hugh sees that sort of drive day after day and is part of the reason he believes McGillivray has such a bright future in his remaining high school days.

"He has goals set right now and he knows what he's trying to work towards," Hugh said. "He's still not 100 percent decided on what weight he's going to go, 52 or 60."

Either way, it'll probably be the route which presents the greatest challenge. Moving to Manassas Park and succeeding in his first year seems like it would be hard enough; why look for the easy way now?