

Gerke earns 150th win for Saints

Written by Jim Ecker

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If somebody asked Josh Gerke to run through a brick wall, his only question would be "Head first or feet first?"

Xavier wrestling coach Ryan Chambers was exaggerating when he made that comment Thursday night, but not by much.

Gerke reached a major milestone Thursday when he collected the 150th victory of his stellar career with a pair of wins against Waterloo East and Waterloo West in a double-dual at Ron Thillen gymnasium.

Fittingly, the 150th victory came on a pin in 87 seconds against Joventay Burris of Waterloo West at 145 pounds. It was the 98th pin of Gerke's career, extending his own school record and giving him a shot at reaching the century mark before the year ends.

Xavier students came prepared with signs that said "150," and there also were big yellow balloons with the numbers 1-5-0 in his honor.

"It's pretty exciting. A lot of hard work and teammates pushing me," said Gerke. "The coaches have spent a lot of time with me. It's a big milestone for all of us."

Gerke got a standing ovation after his 150th verdict.

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"I had a big cheering section. A lot of my friends," he said. "It was pretty exciting to be able to get a pin like that."

Gerke ranks second in school history with his 150 victories, trailing only Clint Lembeck at 165. And if he reaches 100 pins, he'll become only the third wrestler in Metro history in the century club with Matt Wycoff of Marion (124 pins from 1997-2000) and Alijah Jeffery of Linn-Mar (105 from 2011-14), according to the IHSAA website.

"I'd love to get to 100," said Gerke. "Hopefully I can get there."

Chambers said Gerke has been a model wrestler during his four-year varsity career. It began when he collected 25 pins as a freshman and has continued to today.

"It's exciting. It gives me goose-bumps just to think about it," said Chambers, reflecting on Gerke's 150 wins and nearly 100 pins.

"He does whatever you want him to do. And he's a great leader for these young kids. He brings them under his wing and takes care of things."

Gerke got his 149th victory Thursday with a forfeit against Waterloo East, but he went right to work for No. 150 in typical style with a vicious headlock and pin against Waterloo West.

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4th quarter, 17-5