

Briggs enjoying perfect year with Jeff

Written by Jim Ecker

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There's only one word to describe the season Kyle Briggs is having with the Cedar Rapids Jefferson wrestling team.

Perfect.

Briggs raised his record to 26-0 Thursday night with a technical fall as the 10th-ranked J-Hawks defeated Xavier, 53-27, in a Mississippi Valley Conference meet at Jefferson.

Briggs is ranked No. 2 in Class 3A at 152 pounds and has won major titles this season at the Keith Young Invitational, Southeast Polk Invitational and West Des Moines Valley tournament. He also finished 5-0 at the Pipestone Duals in Minnesota and has cruised through his conference bouts as well.

Briggs finished with a 35-9 record last year and placed eighth at the state tournament at 132 pounds, but he's made a big jump this year at his new and more comfortable weight class.

"I feel great," Briggs said after dominating Xavier freshman John Bell, 27-9. "I've never had a start like this, so it feels kind of new and it's really exciting and I'm really enjoying every second of it."

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Dick Briggs, who is Kyle's father and Jefferson's co-head coach, said the jump from 132 to 152 pounds was a good move.

"I think he's more comfortable with the weight class he's at," Briggs said. "The last three years he's lost a ton of weight. This year he's not losing as much and he's more comfortable.

"Honestly I didn't know what was going to happen when he jumped up to 152. He jumped up 20 pounds and three weight classes. I didn't know what to expect."

The answer came quickly when Briggs began the season by winning the 152-pound title at the Keith Young Invitational, beating a couple of ranked wrestlers along the way. "That was my indicator that maybe we were all right there," Coach Briggs said with a smile.



Kyle Briggs said he cut about 13 pounds this season to make weight at 152.

"It was a fair cut, but I still feel healthy," he said. "Healthier than last year."

Briggs said he's a lot stronger this season, thanks to the work he's done in the weight room with Matt Orton, who shares the head coaching duties with his father. Briggs also has spent a considerable amount of time working on his technique by watching videos.

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"I've been watching a lot of film on every position that I can," he related. "I've been soaking up every little detail that I can from every great wrestler. College guys, international guys."

Briggs goes home from school during lunch hour and watches wrestling videos. He watches more videos during his free hour in school later in the day, then watches more videos when he gets home at night.

"He just loves the sport," his father said. "He's a sponge. He just wants to learn. He works very hard at it."

Briggs grew up in a wrestling family and began competing as a young kid in the Jefferson wrestling club, but he tried a lot of different activities before settling on wrestling.

"When he was growing up he played every sport, with the exception of that round-balling (basketball)," Coach Briggs related. "He played soccer, baseball, swimming, gymnastics, football, track. He did it all growing up. I didn't push it on him. I hope I didn't, anyway."

"If he decided to like it, that's great. And if he didn't, that's great too. His favorite sport was always the one that was in-season."

Kyle Briggs said he's a little surprised by the success he's having this season.

"Coming into the year I'm always anticipating the very best for myself, but this is probably better than I would have predicted for myself," he remarked. "So I'm happy with what I've done so far."

Briggs credits his father for gently steering him in the right direction.

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"He's always been an influence on me," he said. "Every year since I was a little kid, he's always been the one pushing me, motivating me."

Briggs said the pressure is mounting as his undefeated season moves along, but he's doing his best to keep things in perspective.

"It's starting to build a bit, but I've been trying to keep it fun," he said. "I remind myself every day, this is my last opportunity and I want to enjoy every bit of it that I can."

"I'm hoping that the pressure won't build up too much. I'm hoping to make some pretty great memories."

Colton Clingenpeel of Council Bluffs Thomas Jefferson is ranked No. 1 at 152 pounds, but there's a long way to go before a possible showdown between Clingenpeel and Briggs at the state tournament. The J-Hawks host their annual tournament this Saturday, then the conference and district meets will come along prior to the state tournaments in Des Moines.

"The goal since Day 1 has been to win state," Briggs said. "Now it's getting closer, becoming a bigger possibility every day. I'm getting excited for it."

It's been a great ride so far for the entire Briggs family.

"I'm proud of him," Coach Briggs said. "It's the second half that can make or break your season, though. So we'll see."

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Jefferson collected seven pins Thursday night from Colten Mastin (113), Brenden Baker (120), Zach Main (126), Dalton Mastin (132), Tavian Rashed (170), Matt Culver (182) and Nick Dreckman (195).

Xavier had four pins from Peter Kennedy (106), Clint Lembeck (138), Josh Gerke (145) and Alex Francois (220).

JEFFERSON 53, XAVIER 27

106 - Peter Kennedy (X) pinned Jaden Collins, 3:03
113 - Colten Mastin (J) pinned Jaxson Konzen, 0:17
120 - Brenden Baker (J) pinned Keegan Schultschik, 0:40
126 - Zach Main (J) pinned Patrick Chambers, 0:38
132 - Dalton Mastin (J) pinned Garrett Ries, 3:21
138 - Clint Lembeck (X) pinned Matt Storm, 1:15
145 - Josh Gerke (X) pinned Cody Clendenen, 1:33
152 - Kyle Briggs (J) tech fall John Bell, 27-9 (3:42)
160 - Coltin Endsley (J) won by forfeit
170 - Tavian Rashed (J) pinned Sam Lampe, 2:25
182 - Matt Culver (J) pinned Kyle Krezec, 3:02
195 - Nick Dreckman (J) pinned Eric Rodriguez, 4:37
220 - Alex Francois (X) pinned Keenan Stewart, 5:26
285 - Tommy Pudil (X) dec. David Bonner, 4-3 (OT)