

Sports

Tate Torgerson carries on family tradition of wrestlers; C-I advances three to state tournament this weekend

by **John Wagner**
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Cambridge-Isanti's Tate Torgerson has a lot riding on his performance in the state individual wrestling tournament this weekend. He would certainly like to finish on the podium as one of the state's top wrestlers – and winning the title certainly is on his mind.

But there is something even bigger on the line: claiming the title as champion of the Torgerson family.

"My brother Ty claims he has the belt as the best wrestler in the family," Tate Torgerson said. "But it's controversial. We're all fighting for it, but I think it's between Ty and me."

The fact that Tate Torgerson, currently a senior on the Cambridge-Isanti wrestling team, is in the running is impressive in itself. His father, Pat, wrestled for the Bluejackets under coach Neil Jennissen, as did his brothers Ty, who is six years older than Tate; Tanner, more than five years older; and Trae, who is a year and a half ahead of Tate.

Growing up in a wrestling family, Tate Torgerson started wrestling when he was 3 years old. And since the competition was his older brothers, he got used to losing.

"I knew, if you measured weight and strength, those fights weren't fair," Tate Torgerson admitted. "But I wanted to wrestle, so I was the one who usually started things. So if I started it, I had to keep going. And I lost almost every time, but for me to 'win' I had to tire them out. If I could do that, it was a victory. But yeah, I was beat up a lot when I was younger."

Torgerson soon realized that wrestling against his older brothers helped him learn the strategy of the sport.

"I realized I had to keep coming because eventually I was able to tire them out and that allowed me to escape," he said. "And since Ty was six years older than I am, he was a lot stronger. I learned a lot of strategy, having to think ahead against someone who was stronger and faster."

Jennissen said he sees how wrestling against his brothers helped prepare Tate Torgerson for the rigors of high school.

"When you're young and have older brothers, that toughens you up – there's no two ways about it," Jennissen said. "You can't shy away from the challenge; if you do, you're going to get picked on."

All that experience against his older brothers allowed Tate Torgerson to practice with the varsity as a seventh-grader, and he posted a 2-3 varsity record that season. That experience really paid off as an eighth-grader, when he posted a 31-8 record wrestling for the varsity at 106 pounds.

As a freshman he went 30-10 and advanced to the state tournament at 120 pounds. But injuries – to his back as a sophomore, where he still finished third at 132 in Section, and a torn labrum that required off-season surgery his junior year – cost him a return trip to the state tournament.

"Those were setbacks," Jennissen said. "When you are wrestling with injuries, it's hard to wrestle with confidence and aggres-



Cambridge-Isanti's Tate Torgerson will wrestle in the 152-pound weight class at the state tournament this weekend. *Photos by Patrick Slack*



Cambridge-Isanti's Wyatt Kruse will wrestle in the 285-pound weight class at the state tournament this weekend.



Cambridge-Isanti's Jimmy Brown won the 170-pound weight class at the section tournament held Feb. 22 and will wrestle in the state tournament this weekend.

siveness. He understands those things can slow you down if you let them. That's why I think this year he's been more focused."

Torgerson is healthy now and was ranked as the No. 1 Class 3A wrestler at 152 pounds by The Guillotine, a website devoted to high school wrestling in Minnesota. He currently is 37-9 in his senior season and advanced to state by claiming second-place in the Section 7 Tournament held at Coon Rapids.

He suffered an upset 5-3 loss in the championship bout at 152, but bounced back with a pin to claim second and punch his ticket to the Xcel Center and the state tournament. That pin was his 103rd of his career, which points to an important part of Torgerson's on-mat strategy.

"My goal is to go out there and make the other kid wish he wasn't wrestling me," he said. "I want him to wish that he wasn't on the mat anymore. I want to make him break mentally so he reaches a point where he wants to give up. For example, when you take a guy down and let him back up, he knows I can take him down at will – and a lot of guys just give up. And even if a guy is fighting hard and I'm still able to get to my arm bar or cross-face, that lets him know I'm in control."

While Jennissen said he is impressed by the improvements Torgerson has made on the mat, the longtime Bluejackets coach is just as impressed by Torgerson's leadership.

"When you have a kid like Tate in your program, it helps improve the program," Jennissen said. "Every day in practice, the rest of the team can watch him work, and the confidence he has rubs off on everyone. Other kids can see the success he has and realize that they can do it, too."

Torgerson has one more step to take before he completes his senior year of high school and eventually joins the program at Augustana University next season.

"If I win a state title this year, everyone will know I'm the one who holds the belt in the family," he said.

Three Bluejackets advance to state

Torgerson was one of three members of the Cambridge-Isanti wrestling team who earned berths in the Class 3A state tournament with strong performances at Coon Rapids.

Junior Jimmy Brown won the 170-pound title thanks a 16-2 major decision over Danny Reynolds of Andover, while senior Wyatt Kruse used an 8-5 decision over Gavin Layton of Coon Rapids to claim the 285-pound title. Both will join Torgerson at the state tournament, which begins Friday, March 1, at the Xcel Energy Center.

Eighth-grader Payton Doty just missed advancing to the state meet at 113. He advanced to the championship match at that weight before losing to John Babineau of Andover, then lost an 8-5 decision to Anoka's Brad Howes in the second-place match.

Senior Dalton Ball placed fourth at 132, while fellow senior Austin Cantrell finished fourth at 195. Fifth-place winners for the Bluejackets were junior Gavin Hajek at 120 pounds, eighth-grader Treytin Byers at 126, junior Romeo Nordquist at 138, junior Aidan Brown at 145.