

sports

Tristan Weirich always ready for a challenge



PHOTO SUBMITTED BY: TRISTAN WEIRICH

Senior wrestler Tristan Weirich competing at a wrestling match.

SEAN REPUYAN
Reporter

Tristen Weirich grips his opponent tightly. Sweat drips from his forehead as the two wrestlers struggle to gain their footing and get the upper hand.

Weirich stares back at the bleachers full of crowd members who are bursting with anticipation. His eyebrows knit together with determination. With one swift movement, Weirich pins his opponent against the mat.

One... Two... Three... And it's all over.

Tristen Weirich has been wrestling consistently for 15 years. Weighing in at 285 pounds, Weirich is a heavyweight wrestler associated with Ashland University's men's wrestling team. As a senior now at Ashland, Weirich has built quite the reputation for himself both on and off the mat.

Weirich is a double major in Cyber Security and Criminal Justice, with a 10-0 record under his belt as a senior. Being a home-grown ashland athlete, Weirich got his start in

wrestling in the second grade.

"I had a few behavioral problems when I was younger," Weirich recalled. "In second grade, my teachers recommended using wrestling as an outlet for my behavior."

As Weirich continued his journey with the sport at Ashland High School, he said he felt that he did not feel like he was where he wanted to be when it came to his progress.

"My first two years, I wasn't where I wanted to be," Weirich said. "I suffered an injury and I felt like I had no support from my first coach. But still, you can't let a coach decide how good you are at your own sport."

It was until his junior year in high school when things started picking up for him.

"The progression was a lot better with a new coach," Weirich said. "The new lifting program he started really helped me get motivated."

Weirich's motivation with wrestling has seen some ups and downs. However, that is what he loves about the sport. The saying, "practice makes perfect" doesn't

come lightly to him, but Weirich loves the drive that comes with learning new things.

"All the practicing and practicing and practicing, until it finally comes to fruition is great," Weirich said. "It drives me to be better and motivates me to be a better person."

In his senior year of high school, Weirich managed to place fourth at the state championships and had a 110-32 record and 32 pins.

When it came to college, Weirich decided to stay close to home and enroll in Ashland University. However, he joined the wrestling team in the spring semester.

"I don't think I came in at the right time for what I was expecting," Weirich said. "I expected hard practices, but my sophomore year was a lot more intense and I enjoyed the challenge it brought."

Weirich wants and enjoys people around him to push him to be his best. As he got to know his teammates and fellow players, he built close bonds with them.

"I started hanging out with the national qualifier on the team, and I ended up beating him in a

match," Weirich said. "But they still took him over me to take to regionals, but I guess that just meant I didn't earn it yet."

His drive and motivation kicked in once more. By his junior year at Ashland University, he considered himself to have skyrocketed athletically.

Weirich spent more time with the lifting program and put all of his effort into improving himself, saying he is always striving to be better.

"Things were going well," Weirich said. "I placed sixth, and beat the guy who won nationals. I was getting a lot of coaching and looking for scouting, but for some reason I wasn't happy."

Although many things were looking up, Weirich says his drive to keep getting better clouded his mental health. He was then faced with a season-ending injury, separating a bone and ripping out the cartilage.

The next fall, his senior year, Weirich was in the Navy. That semester he was redshirted, unattached and not competing under Ashland University.

"Mentally, I felt sharper," Weirich said. "I did more things that I wanted in a match."

However, at nationals, Weirich placed similarly to his junior year. He considered his sixth placement a let-down at nationals.

Regardless of the many challenges he has faced, Weirich currently has a record of 10-0, being one of the three undefeated grapplers on the team.

"Although my placing was kind of a let-down, wrestling has taught me that it isn't fun to be afraid of losing," Weirich said. "I've always had the most fun and it has changed the way I see competition."

For Weirich, sports are about opening up about yourself and being able to love what you do and do what you love.

When it comes to his future, Weirich wants to incorporate wrestling into his career path, alongside Cybersecurity and Criminal Justice.

"I want to be able to finish up my degree, wrestle and go for a fourth All-American," Weirich said. "I'll just kind of have to see where it takes me after that."

Mike Jewell named interim head women's lacrosse coach

NIKO SCARLATOS
Reporter

What is change? Is it considered a good or bad thing? For the Ashland University Women's Lacrosse Team, change has made the program's future look brighter than ever before.

While only in its third season here at Ashland, the program has been in search for the correct culture since day one. 2019 saw the inaugural team finish with a record of 5-11 followed by a 2-4 record in 2020 before the season got cut short due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Entering the 2021 campaign, there were a lot of questions surrounding all Spring sports, but especially the lacrosse team.

Along with the concerns as to whether or not the season was even going to get played due to the worldwide virus, the lacrosse squad was still looking for someone to lead the way and bring a positive, winning culture along with them. In came Mike Jewell.

It is never easy to decide on who they feel is most fit for a big position like this.

"It was really difficult for the team after how abruptly things ended with the previous head coach," Mike Jewell, new Interim Head Coach said.

"It left the team with many questions to answer, making the interview and hiring process one that

required many background checks while doing this all in a short period of time."

Jewell is currently the vice president of and head girls coach at the Wooster Lacrosse Club while also serving 28 years as a member of the Wooster Police Department.

He is also a certified CWLOA collegiate women's lacrosse and NEOLA high school girls lacrosse official.

Being a referee has allowed Jewell to excel as a coach due to his knowledge of the game itself.

"Having a history of officiating, I have a different viewpoint than what other coaches may have on the game which allows me to better prepare the team for being able to play the game by the rules while still being able to challenge the other team," Coach Jewell said.

The players have been very excited about the change as well as it gives them hope that this can be a very special season for them.

"Many of us were left in the dark during the coaching change," Rachel Lustik, a senior playing in her third season on the team said. "It's really cool and relieving to see the energy he brings every single day."

As a new coach, it is always important to get off on the right foot and earn the trust of your players and that starts right away during the first few practices.

"Coach is really fun," Jillian Rekulak, a sophomore on the team said.

"He loves being out there with us and coaching the team and it's exciting for us knowing that our leader is motivated everyday."

While many would say winning is the most important thing, Coach Jewell has something different as his number one goal in the 2021 season — just have fun.

"After everything this program went through at the start, I told the girls that the biggest thing is to have fun," said Jewell.

"While that might not sound like much, that was and continues to be one of our driving motivators and of course we want to win so if we can do both, then we are accom-

plishing more than what our objectives are."

The Eagles are definitely going to have some fun while playing under Jewell and will look to finish above .500 this season for the first time in program history.



JORDANN LOPATA

Members of the Ashland womens lacrosse team pictured above.