

Two years ago, St. Charles North's Drew Surges lost a close match and the chance to go to state: 'I don't ever want to be in that position again.'

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St. Charles North's Drew Surges, left, controls St. Charles East's Michael Wirkus in the third-place match at 153 pounds in the DuKane Conference Meet at Batavia on Saturday, Feb. 1, 2020. (H. Rick Bamman / The Beacon-News)

St. Charles North junior Drew Surges is not one for second guessing himself. He prefers to keep his focus on what's directly in front of him.

Still, he has learned from the biggest loss of his young life.

"With wrestling, I can rely on myself more," Surges said. "If I lose, it's on me. Not everyone can handle that pressure, but I like dealing with that."

The 6-foot-2 Surges, who has a 22-0 record, has solidified his standing this season as one of the state's top wrestlers at 182 pounds in Class 3A.

He combines quickness, speed and range.

"I think I have a great ability to read and react to any situation," he said.

"Every time I wrestle, I go out there in the first 30 seconds and feel my opponent out.

"I never want to be that wrestler who gets stuck underneath somewhere. With my length, I can reach for a leg on that single."

His success this winter marks a continuation of a breakout football season in the fall.

As a running back and linebacker, Surges led the North Stars with 522 yards and 11 touchdowns. He also had a team-best 54 solo tackles.

"The two sports really go together, especially the physical and mental part," Surges said. "Wrestling is one of the toughest sports. In football, you get hit every play and you have to get up over and over, again and again.

"Wrestling definitely helps with my ability to tackle. My IQ also translates to wrestling, in my ability to read the game."

One of his uncles helped Surges develop an interest in wrestling at age 4. And Surges has never looked back.

Junior teammate Alex Kuchta praised Surges' leadership. "Our team consists primarily of new wrestlers this year," Kuchta said. "Drew goes out of his way to teach others how to perfect their craft. "Drew's personality is great to have in the wrestling room. He is a pure athlete who has tons of experience and always brings energy into the room."

According to Trey Hossli, another junior and a close friend, Surges never takes anything for granted. "He is a great presence and a great leader," Hossli said. "He is naturally gifted in this sport. He is able to make himself better every single day while making everyone around him better."

Surges made his varsity wrestling debut two years as a freshman at 152. Going up against much older athletes was a formidable task. He had to adapt on the move.



St. Charles North's Drew Surges (6) gets tripped up by Batavia's Tyler Jansey (7) during the first half of a game in St. Charles on Friday, Oct. 22, 2021. (John Konstantaras / The Beacon-News)

“The strength of the other wrestlers was the biggest adjustment and the wrestling was a lot faster,” Surges said. “It also helped me because I realized I had to make faster decisions.”

The experience was formed from disappointment and heartbreak. Surges lost a tight decision that prevented him from qualifying for the individual state meet in Champaign. That memory still burns brightly.

“That makes me now always want to be the guy that beat me,” Surges said. “I don’t ever want to lose in that scenario again. I want to work however hard is necessary and always be the one who finishes on top.

“I don’t ever want to be in that position again.”

Surges is now staring at the crucial stage of the season. Saturday’s DuKane Conference Meet effectively launches the start of the state series.

“Being undefeated this year, with really just one close match, my confidence is really high,” Surges said. “I don’t let it get too high where I don’t think anyone can beat me.

“Even when I was younger, going into every big match, I always had this attitude I was going to win every time.”

*Patrick Z. McGavin is a freelance reporter for the Naperville Sun.*

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