

WRESTLING

Rock'em Sock'em

Wrestler remembers friend with fun socks



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DARLINGTON — When Ethan Aird gets ready for a match, he likes to get into a “mojo.” He warms up his muscles, jumps up and down . . . and pulls up his knee-high patterned socks.

Ethan began wearing the fun-printed socks his freshman year after the passing of his friend Carson Hartwig in 2020.

Carson, who would have been a senior at Darlington High School this year, was diagnosed with Osteosarcoma in January 2018. He passed away on March 2, 2020 at 15-years-old.

Since Carson’s diagnosis and passing, the Darlington sports community has dedicated many events to and raised thousands of dollars for him and the Hartwig family. Carson’s brother James played baseball, so the baseball team did a Miracle Minute during one of their games. The cross country team has done the Relay for Life and Run Across Wisconsin. This fall, the football team raised \$6,238 in their halftime Miracle Minute.

While the community mourned Carson, the loss hit Ethan a little closer to home. When the Hartwigs moved into town, they lived right down the street from the Airds. Ethan and Carson bonded as neighbors and became closer friends through wrestling, choir and musicals.

Growing up, Carson would wear “crazy socks,” so Ethan knew the best way to honor his friend was to continue the trend.

“When he died it hit hard because I was good friends with him,” Ethan said. “I said you know what, ‘I’m going to do it for myself, but most importantly, I’m going

to do it for him.’ He was always big into being yourself and not caring what everyone else thinks about you. If you like something, do it. He always had funky socks on, a crazy hat or a weird shirt.”

Ethan didn’t like plain, short socks anyway; he always had a taste for flair. He started with Goonies socks and bought more, including Harry Potter and the Office. Ethan now boasts a collection of shark, chicken, Santa, heart, donut, Donald Trump, leprechaun, Christmas tree, flamingo, American flag and cocoa mug socks — just to name a few.

“I never really liked one solid color,” Ethan said. “I thought it was plain and boring. I always got a kick out

of seeing weird socks. . . . I like keeping it fun.”

Not only did wearing the socks help Ethan keep Carson close to heart, but it also psyched him up for his wrestling matches. Ethan was more confident wearing the fun socks than without, and that came to play in his state semifinal match this year.

Ethan drew Wyatt Magolski of New London, a junior who posted a 44-4 record headed into the match. Experts favored Magolski — and big — but that didn’t stop Ethan.

“In warm ups, I like to get a flow going — my mojo, my mental game. If I go into it super confident in myself, I tend to do better,” Ethan said. “My semifinal match at state, the kid I wrestled was

favored by a bunch. I was ready. I thought, ‘I’m going to wrestle my match and beat him.’ I ended up beating him 7-1. If I go out there in funky socks, it helps me mentally.”

There have been times Ethan’s chosen plain socks, though. When he’s been in a slump or injured, he wore the less flamboyant socks. Ethan didn’t want to wrestle in flashy socks just to go out and lose.

“If I wasn’t wrestling good, I wouldn’t want to go out there wearing Santa socks,” Ethan said. “I would get a pair of plain-colored socks then.”

Ethan suffered just three losses prior to the post-season, and he was determined not to let it happen in regionals or sectionals. He began to analyze the matches he lost,

trying to find the common thread.

“Going into regionals, I thought what did I do different in these three matches than the other matches,” Ethan said. “I thought back and it wasn’t the singlet — I wore the same singlet every single time — but I went into the matches thinking the kid was good: ‘Maybe I’m not going to dominate him, so I don’t want to wear super out-there socks. I don’t want to lose and look like an idiot.’”

But that thinking wasn’t Ethan — it wasn’t what gave him the success all season long.

“Then I said, ‘You know what? I’m done with this iffy thinking,’” Ethan said. “If I wear the socks and lose, so be it. At least I know I was going out there and doing

what I wanted to do. No more plain-colored socks in these matches. No more normal socks.”

In regionals, which occurred just three days before Valentine’s Day, Ethan wore pink heart-patterned socks. He went 3-0 with a tech fall and two major decisions to become a regional champion. The next weekend at sectionals, he wore candy heart socks. Ethan went undefeated again, recording two pins and a 7-2 decision. As a sectional champion, Ethan earned his second trip to state.

He continued to wear whacky socks at state, propelling him to the 113-pound championship match against Charlie Meudt of Dodgeville. After three full periods, Ethan fell to Meudt 12-6, all while wearing his socks.

Ethan finished his junior campaign with a 31-4 record. Ten of those wins came by pinfall, while another seven were by major decision and three by technical fall. He was the Division 2 state runner-up at 113 pounds, a regional champion and sectional champion. He took first at the TKO-Terry Kramer Open and Lancaster Invite and finished second at the Rick Lawinger Invitational and Mid-States Wrestling Classic.

Although Carson passed away three years ago, he’s been along for the ride in each pair of socks that Ethan has worn. If Ethan has learned anything from Carson, it’s to express yourself and not be afraid of what others think.

“Be yourself. Accept who you are,” Ethan said. “If you want to do something, do it. You shouldn’t let anyone stop you from doing what you want to do or what you love. Whether it’s wearing a neon yellow shirt or funky socks.”

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— Ethan Aird, Darlington Junior



LEFT: Ethan Aird wore lucky leprechaun socks during his state championship match. **RIGHT:** Ethan wrestled at the WIAA Division 2 Belleville regional on Saturday, Feb. 11, just three days before Valentine’s Day, with pink heart socks.

Times photos: Natalie Dillon

MWC competes at Wisconsin Dells, Boscobel; Regionals approach

MONROE — On Saturday, March 11, seven Monroe Wrestling Club wrestlers competed at the Boscobel Wrestling Tournament. The results from the day were:

- Jakobie Liphart (Gr 3-4 55-60) fourth place
- Briggs Engelkens (Gr 3-4 58-62lbs) second place
- Charles Pfeifer (Gr 3-4 70-73lbs) second place
- Jaxon Gobeli (Gr 3-4 83-87lbs) second place
- Grayson Wallin (Gr 5-6 61-65lbs) first place
- Bralyn Liphart (Gr 7-8 110-118lbs) fourth place
- Aiden Mosley (Gr 7-8 170-195lbs) second place

DOMINATE IN THE DELLS

Monroe Wrestling Club had six wrestlers — one being a former youth wrestler now high school wrestler — compete in the very competitive Dominate in the Dells Tournament on Saturday, March 11 and Sunday, March 12. This tournament is held at the Woodside Wisconsin Dells Center Dome with over 1,100 wrestlers participating.

Patrick Harms (14U 136 lbs) had a great day and

placed fifth. Blaine Fletcher (12U 78lbs) wrestled very well and took sixth place in his bracket. Dixon Starr (10U 56lbs) did not place in the tournament. For the first time, a True Beginner category was added to the tournament, and three Monroe Wrestling Club wrestlers competed: Samuel Queen (10U 61lbs); Eli Schmitz (8U 55-56lbs); and Caleb Schmitz (14U 60-66lbs). All took first place.

REGIONAL QUALIFIERS

Monroe Wrestling Club will have 34 wrestlers competing at the Regional Qualifiers on Saturday, March 18. The top three in each age group / weight class will move on to the Youth State Wrestling Tournament March 24-25 at the Alliant Energy Center in Madison.

Photo supplied
Samual Queen, Eli Schmitz and Caleb Schmitz participated in a True Beginning category at the Dominate in the Dells tournament, where they all finished first.

