

# PIN-UP FOR WRESTLING

Sophomore Britany Howard takes on the challenge of being the lone female on the wrestling team



By Yena Berhane  
WEB MANAGING EDITOR

There's one basic rule to be followed when preparing for the upcoming wrestling season: pin your opponent down, regardless of gender. Sophomore Britany Howard is the first girl to join the wrestling team in over ten years.

Starting her second year, Howard is beginning to understand more about the ins and outs of the team.

"A guy is naturally stronger than a girl, so when I'm actually out there I have to think faster than them and really try," Howard said. "You would think that the guys would take it easy on me but they don't."

Even though wrestling is a no-cut coed sport, Howard joining the wrestling team was a surprise to her mother. "That was me, like 'you don't want to be a cheerleader, you don't want to play basketball?' I'm like 'why wrestling?' I said it's not too many girls that I know that wrestle," Charlena Howard said. "So she was just like 'Mom it's something different, I don't want to be like everybody else.' That's her, that's Britany's whole mentality. She wants to be the one that stands out and be different from everyone."

Wrestling coach Eric Julien instills that everyone must be treated equally and taking it easy is not helpful to anyone on the team.

"I don't take it easy on them, so I think they learned that no one's going to take it easy on them. Why should they take it easy on somebody else?" Julien said. "That's not going to help anyone in the room get better if people are being nice to each other. The more competitive you are, the better off you are in wrestling."

Wrestling matches are dependent on what weight class you're put in. Howard, who was 112 lbs throughout last season, was consistently in the lower weight class. Usually taking a void at most matches, because there wasn't another opponent for her to wrestle, gave the team an automatic six points as the only wrestler in that weight class.

Equality on the mat stands true, but off the mat Howard recognizes that despite being a part of the team, she can't do everything with the guys.

"Sometimes I didn't feel welcomed into the team, that's how I felt like at first, but as time went on, the team loves me and the coaches too," Howard said. "Sometimes I feel left out for certain things. When we go to other schools and I'm in the locker room, I have to go to the girls locker room and I'm always in there by myself."

Along with being placed in a separate changing room, Howard is weighed in apart from the boys. On certain occasions she's joined by other girls in the process at wrestling tournaments.

"(Another girl at the wrestling tournament and I) talked about everything and we said we liked how the guys don't take it easy on us and how they accept us," Howard said. "That's one thing I was worried about — the guys not accepting me because I'm a girl, but I was completely wrong."

A girl joining a male-dominated sport was a surprise to senior teammate Joey Lawnicki.

"We were a little hesitant at first because we bet she wouldn't stay on the team, like that she would keep going for the rest of the season, but turned out that she's a tough person and she was going to stay," Lawnicki said.

Staying committed allowed Howard and the team to bond.

"I just kinda fit right in. I never really looked at them differently because they were boys or anything. It's easy to talk to them all the time and me becoming closer with them made me feel really comfortable," Howard said. "It's different, but I'm so used to guys now that I don't even realize that yeah I'm the only girl."

Stereotypes don't apply to the jocks on the team. Julien knows that Howard's acceptance with the boys was a smooth transition.

"It wasn't a huge adjustment period. It's not like they sat there and were in complete shock that there was a girl," Julien said. "Some of them might have been more shocked that there was a girl hanging out with them than anything else."

Senior teammate Ardie Milwrik knows that gender does not define how strong of a wrestler you can be, helping Howard fit into the team.

"Her being a girl doesn't have so much to do with it, it's about how much training we give her. The more training we get to put in, then the better she will be as a competitor," Milwrik said. "Being a girl has absolutely nothing to do with how good you can be as a wrestler."

Charlena Howard feels that Britany's strength is both physical and mental.

"It's made her stronger definitely, and that's something I'm happy about because I'm always telling her to stand up for herself," Charlena said. "Don't let nobody run over you or whatever, and I love the fact that she has that now. You can see her strength."



ABOVE: Coach Brian Stackpoole walks with senior captain Caelin Micks. RIGHT: Stackpoole, Micks, sophomore Sammy Karwowicz, Benoit, freshman Meghan Gallagher, Liz Gallagher and coach Brian Degnore at states.



## GIRLS GOLF TAKES ON STATES

By Billy Moin  
EDITOR

After tying with South Lyon East High School for eleventh place in the state tournament, captain Liz Gallagher and the girls golf team have officially wrapped up the season.

"We did really good this season," Gallagher said. "We played hard teams, and we finished 8-0, undefeated on the season, and that's a big deal for us."

At the regional tournament, Gallagher hit the lowest score of anyone competing and led the team to a second-place finish. According to coach Brian Stackpoole, this is the best the team has done since 2003.

The state tournament, which was held at Bedford Valley in Battle Creek on Friday Oct. 16 and Saturday Oct. 17, had players shooting 18 holes each day. While every team had five girls compete, only the four lowest scores contributed to their total score.

However, according to Gallagher, the best part of the season wasn't competing in states. It was getting there.

"My favorite moment would have to have been our regional day," Gallagher said. "I think we had the most fun that day, and everyone played well, and it was gorgeous out, and we placed better than we thought we were going to place."

In the week before the competition, Stackpoole brought in 2002 alumnus Ryan Lenahan to speak to the girls. Lenahan played for Nebraska's golf team and now competes professionally.

"He said you really just have to believe in yourself. I mean golf's definitely a sport where you can have one great day, and the next can be terrible," Gallagher said. "He just really concentrated on us focusing and being smart about the plays we make."

In addition to speaking with Lenahan, the team took several other steps to prepare for states. According to captain Olivia Benoit, throughout the previous week, they played nine holes every day. The team

traveled to Bedford Valley the day before the tournament to practice there. They also kept an upbeat attitude and discussed the steps they would take to reach their goal: placing within the top 10 at the state tournament.

At the tournament, the team had a total score of 750, earning them eleventh place. Portage Northern, who took tenth, had a score of 749. Despite missing their objective by all of one stroke, Gallagher is still proud of the way the team played.

"I think we battled through it," she said. "There's definitely a lot of teams that have a lot more girls than we do, so competing against these teams that are bringing in like 30 girls at tryouts was hard, but we really battled through it."

In Stackpoole's mind, this team stood out from those past in one key area.

"I really think that this is by far the most competitive team that I've had," he said. "They really thrived under pressure and really wanted to play the best teams at all times and wanted the challenge."

These obstacles came in multiple forms, relating to golf as well as school.

"There are a lot of challenges with golf. One, it's just difficult for us to play, to get tee times, to play as much as we would want," Stackpoole said. "Also, it's difficult because you miss a lot of school, so it's a lot of pressure on the girls that they have to keep up the academic side as well as keep playing."

When it came time for the state tournament, the team faced yet another issue—the weather. According to Stackpoole, the temperature was in the 30s and 40s both days, with windchills making it feel even colder.

Even though the season just ended, some players are already looking towards next fall.

"Next year, we're not going to have as many seniors," sophomore Sammy Karwowicz said. "Our main goal will probably be to try our best as underclassmen and an overall team to make it far into the season."



ABOVE: Senior captains Olivia Benoit, Liz Gallagher and Caelin Micks pose for a picture.

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