



Wesleyan Christian Academy won the NCHSAA 4A state basketball championship with a 73-49 romp past Leesville Road in the final inside Raleigh's RBC Arena. See complete coverage on Page B1.

ate set for library project

General contractor WC Construction Co. will begin in with grading work at the northwest corner of the library parking lot, says City Facility Services Director Tim McKinney. The project will add sidewalks, two farmer's market stalls, lighting and other

aesthetic features in the parking lot with the goal of facilitating a community gathering location in the center of the city. "We've segmented it out in three phases so we can keep the operation going and keep people moving in and out of the

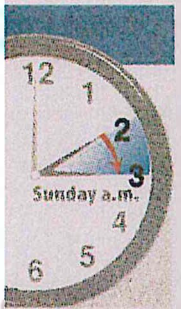
facility, and the disruption is limited," McKinney said. "It will be somewhat similar to when we did the addition (in 2008 and 2009). It will be a level of inconvenience, but what we try to do is have enough staff on hand to assist patrons and

plan everything well in advance." The first phase was completed last year, with the construction of the outdoor children's area on the North Main Street side of the library. SEE **LIBRARY/PAGE A2**

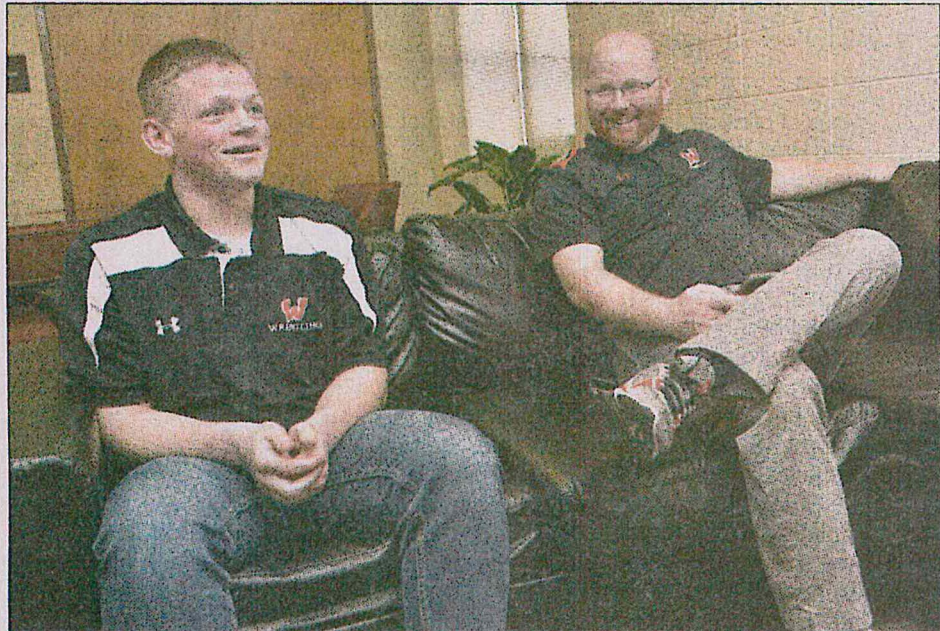
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Wesleyan Christian Academy senior Grayson Pietrantozzi, left, is shown with his coach Phillip Merritt. After undergoing open heart surgery, Pietrantozzi recovered and helped his team place second in the North Carolina Independent Schools Athletic Association. LAURA GREENE | HPE

Wesleyan wrestler inspires team

BY CINDE INGRAM
ENTERPRISE STAFF WRITER

HIGH POINT

Teammates and classmates call him Superman, and his recovery a miracle — not a word used lightly at Wesleyan Christian Academy. Early last year, senior Grayson Pietrantozzi recovered from open heart

surgery to remove a tumor that caused him to suffer a stroke. By late last year, he underwent a second surgery to remove another tumor that revealed itself through severe pain in his right leg while he was running to get in shape for wrestling season.

SEE **WRESTLER/PAGE A2**



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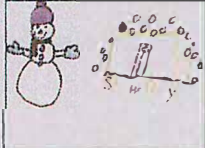
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 - Glenda Kay Walton Brown, 69
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 - Lois Hedrick Lassiter, 100
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WEATHER

Snow likely
High 44, Low 28



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GRADE 1 |
PARKVIEW
ELEMENTARY

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WRESTLER

FROM THE FRONT PAGE

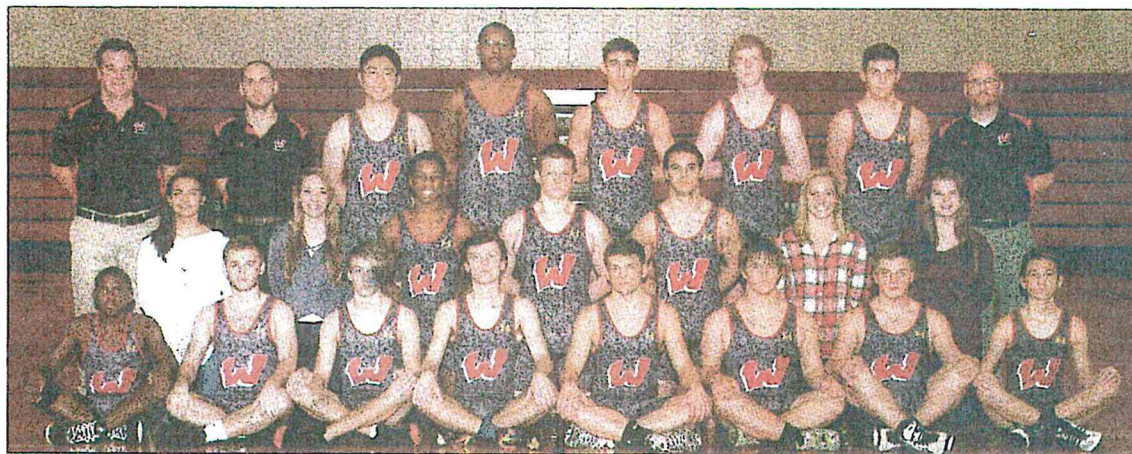
Although he missed six weeks of the season, Pietrantozzi finished fourth in the state and helped his wrestling team place second in the North Carolina Independent Schools Athletic Association. When asked what advice he would give other young people facing challenges, Pietrantozzi said, "I would say never give up."

The 18-year-old was unaware his words echoed those of the late N.C. State University basketball coach Jim Valvano's memorable speech at the 1993 ESPY Awards, but Wesleyan wrestling coach Phillip Merritt recalled those inspirational words. Merritt recently was named NCISAA Coach of the Year, a fitting tribute in the year he plans to retire.

"The reason I got voted coach of the year was because of him and the other guys on the team working so hard," Merritt said of Pietrantozzi. Merritt witnessed Pietrantozzi lose more than 100 pounds through dieting and hard work from his sophomore year to today. At his heaviest, he weighed about 295 pounds. Pietrantozzi had lost 60 pounds last year while trying to get in shape.

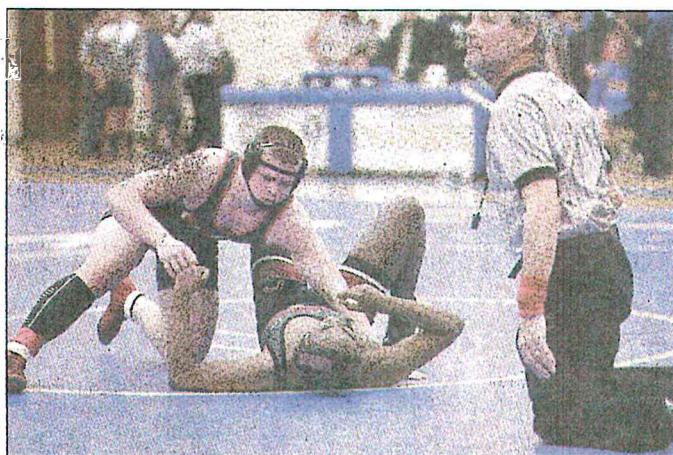
After Pietrantozzi collapsed at wrestling practice on Jan. 13, 2016, he was taken by ambulance to Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center. After a battery of tests, doctors determined he had suffered a series of mini strokes.

His mother, Tracey Beck, had been home at the time with her 4-year-old son when she got the call. She



SPECIAL | HPE

The Wesleyan Christian Academy varsity wrestling 2016-17 team finished second in the North Carolina Independent Schools Athletic Association. The team was very supportive of Grayson Pietrantozzi while he was recovering from his surgeries.



SPECIAL | HPE

Wesleyan Christian Academy senior Grayson Pietrantozzi, left, wrestles his opponent in a semifinal match during the Blue and Gold Tournament in Cary in February, earning a second-place finish.

told The High Point Enterprise later, "We would have never found the tumor had he not had the strokes."

Two days after his collapse, Pietrantozzi's team competed without him in a wrestling tournament at Wesleyan. His teammates donned temporary tattoos under their arms with a message from the Bible's second book of Timothy: "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." Pietrantozzi was able to recite the verse, which Beck thought

may be important to the team.

Pietrantozzi's teammates visited him at the hospital, sent cards and referred to him by the "Superman" nickname Grayson's father had given him years earlier.

Looking back, Pietrantozzi said he felt really grateful for the support from his teammates. "Because I loved everyone on that team, and the team now," he said. "I don't know actually what I would have done if I had not had that support. Everyone was there as much as they could be.

And that meant a lot to me."

He admits he felt stressed during much of his junior year. "I missed a lot of school," he said. "I knew I couldn't wrestle then. I was just trying to get myself better after that. After the heart surgery, it took me probably about two months to be somewhat normal with memory and speech. Mentally, I wasn't there yet. Some people couldn't tell, but I could. Then it started coming back to me, which was awesome. It was probably April

"I loved everyone on that team, and the team now. I don't know actually what I would have done if I had not had that support. Everyone was there as much as they could be. And that meant a lot to me."

— Grayson Pietrantozzi

before I started feeling like myself."

Throughout last summer, he worked to get back into wrestling shape. He started fresh with running, which he normally enjoys, until pain stopped him.

"I could not run anymore because my right leg had a blockage in a vein," Pietrantozzi said. "It just felt like a really bad cramp that would never go away. That was not OK, because we run a lot in wrestling. Walking would affect it, too, but not as much. When wrestling season was starting, I told Coach Merritt I needed to have the surgery."

His coach and teammates rallied behind him during his surgeries and recoveries. Pietrantozzi's doctors gave him approval to return to wrestling during the winter break.

"It was a little frightening, but I came back ready to work," Pietrantozzi said. "My leg hurt a little bit when I came back, but that

went away very fast. As I was going through the motions of wrestling, I noticed it was getting stronger. Everything was just working out for me."

His return to the team provided a huge boost to the team, Merritt said.

"It's the first time in our history we outscored everybody else in our state tournament. Every one of our guys placed, and he's a big part of that, his story, his working through adversity," Merritt said.

Merritt said the crowd roared at the Feb. 17-18 state tournament at Cary Academy when Pietrantozzi pinned and upset his fourth-seed opponent.

After his May 26 graduation, Pietrantozzi hopes to join the Marine Corps in honor of his grandfather. Later in life, he envisions working as a therapist to people who have experienced trauma.

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