

**NORTH SPOTLIGHT
WRESTLING**

North Hills senior sets lofty goals for himself

By Ken Wunderley

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Ben Amrhein set two goals for his final year at North Hills High School.

"I want to finish my senior year with straight As and win a WPIAL wrestling title."

Those are lofty goals, but within reach for a dedicated student/athlete such as Amrhein.

"I entered the year ranked fourth in my class with a 4.2 GPA," he said. "I was first last year, but got an 89 in calculus and a B in chemistry. I was really disappointed because I had a chance to be Valedictorian."

Amrhein is taking six Advanced Placement classes.

"My goal is to finish with straight As, but I don't think it will be enough to move me to No. 1," he said. "North Hills has a very tough curriculum and a lot of very dedicated kids. It's an honor to rank in the top five in my class."

Amrhein is competitive both in and out of the classroom.

"I like competing in the classroom as much as I do when I'm on the wrestling mat," he said. "Both are a challenge, and I love a challenge."

Amrhein is a four-year starter for the Indians. He broke into the starting lineup as a 145-pound freshman but missed part of the season with an injury.

"I was playing four sports in eighth grade — football, baseball, track and wrestling," he said. "I suffered a hamstring injury during the spring that year, then tried to play football and re-aggravated the injury. I missed most of the season, but did wrestle in the section tournament."

Amrhein posted a 9-6 record that season after losing twice in the Section 3-AAA tournament.

"I decided to concentrate on wrestling after eighth grade because there is less chance of getting hurt," said Amrhein, who returned for his sophomore year with a clean bill of health. He placed third in Section 3-AAA and sixth in the WPIAL as a 152-pound sophomore. He finished the season with a 29-12 record.

A concussion kept Amrhein from a better finish at the WPIAL tournament that year. That happened in the consolation semifinals against Butler's Josh Pascazi.

"I was winning 4-2 when it happened, but I didn't realize it and continued wrestling. I eventually lost in overtime and went to the hospital right after the match. I remember laying on the hospital bed wondering what could have been," he said.

Amrhein moved to 160 last season and placed second in Section 3-AAA and fifth in the WPIAL.

"I thought I was in good shape in the 160-pound weight class," he said. "Then two returning WPIAL champions — Hempfield's Jake Kernerer and West Mifflin's James Fleming — moved into my weight class. It was a brutal weight class."

Amrhein lost again in the consolation semifinals, this time to Bethel Park's Nick Bonaccorsi who he beat earlier in the season. "I've come close [to qualifying for the PIAA tournament] the last two years, but fell short both times," he said. "My goal this year is to win the WPIAL title. That would give me an automatic berth in the [PIAA] tournament."

Amrhein finished his junior year with a 36-9 record and entered this season with a 74-27 career mark.

"Ben is one of the most dedicated student-athletes I've ever coached," North Hills coach Jose Martinez said. "He's shown amazing discipline both on and off the mat. It's a fantastic accomplishment to be ranked among the top five in his class at such a big high school."

Amrhein is still competing at 160 and entered the week with a 10-1 record.

"I would like to continue wrestling in college at a Division I school," he said. "I looked into schools like Lehigh, Bucknell, Princeton and Ohio State, but have narrowed my choices to Pitt and West Point. I've already been accepted at West Point, but I need a nomination from a congressman. I have an interview with Jason Altire [D-McCandless] on Jan. 10."