

Eslinger ready to take next step at Baker University



Louisburg's Elijah Eslinger, who is coming off back-to-back state medals at the high school level, will wrestle for the Baker University program next season.

Elijah Eslinger didn't start wrestling till the eighth grade, but that didn't stop him from accomplishing something great.

Eslinger went on to become a two-time state medalist for the Louisburg wrestling team, and now he is hoping to make even bigger strides at the next level.

The Louisburg graduate signed on to join the Baker University wrestling program and will compete at the NAIA level next season.

"When I signed for Baker, it solidified my goal to continue in the sport that I love," Eslinger said.

It has been a labor of love for Eslinger as the results didn't come right away. As the Wildcat heavyweight, he took his fair share of lumps as a freshman and sophomore.

The wins weren't always there, but Eslinger kept improving and the results started to show as a junior, where he earned a spot in the state semifinals and brought home a state medal.

Eslinger did the same thing his senior campaign as he became known as one of the top heavyweights in Class 4A.

"I'm incredibly excited for Elijah to compete at Baker for a lot of reasons," Louisburg coach Bobby Bovaird said. "He started wrestling as an eighth grader and then a year later, he got thrown in with the wolves pretty much. As a freshman, he was our only wrestler at 285 lbs., and if he didn't represent us in duals, we would have been open there.

"He went from being winless as a freshman to making the state semifinals two years straight as a junior and senior. Being a Baker University alumnus, I'm excited for the opportunities for growth that he'll have at Baker. His potential truly is untapped, and I know he's going to excel in whatever he takes on."



Louisburg senior Elijah Eslinger signed his letter of intent to join the Baker University wrestling team. Sitting with Elijah are his parents Dean and Heather Eslinger. Standing (from left) is his sister Leola, Louisburg assistant coaches Shane Miller and Shawn Crossley, Baker assistant coach, Louisburg head coach Bobby Bovaird and Elijah's brother Trace.

Eslinger enjoyed the challenge of reaching that state podium.

"I feel that I have had a fairly meteoric growth since freshman year," Eslinger said. "From no wins my freshman year, to a qualifier sophomore year, to placing both junior and

senior years, I have had a great time, which helped me continue to get better.”

Baker is the place where Eslinger believes he can take the next step in his wrestling journey. While on his visit, he enjoyed the coaches what the program had to offer.

At the same time, Eslinger, who will major in history, said the school itself was another big reason in his decision.

“Honestly, while the wrestling program is a great program, it was the academic focus that really won me over,” he said. “Right now I’m planning on going into college with no expectations and will just see what happens.”