

Brainpower makes difference for Graves on mat

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One of four valedictorians at Memorial High School, Mark Graves Jr. relishes his role as the thinking man's wrestler — sometimes to a fault.

"Mark, he's a technical sort of wrestler," said Tigers coach Larry Mattingly. "He's a good scrambler, too."

Even when he didn't have much technique, Graves thrived as a freshman, relying on guts and instinct.

"Sometimes he needs to get back to that," Mattingly said. "He thinks too much. He puts a lot of time and effort into it."

Graves had no problems making the leap from a two-time semistate performer at 160 pounds to posting a 31-2

record at 189 as a senior. He hopes to win his first Southern Indiana Athletic Conference championship on Saturday at Castle. Round one will begin at 9 a.m. with the finals scheduled for approximately 1:30 p.m.

Graves, who usually weighs around 180, is more concerned about himself than Bosse's J.T. Jones, his first-round opponent.

"In a season like wrestling, it seems so brutal on the body, but at the same time, it is pretty concentrated length-wise compared to basketball season," Graves said. "I've found over the years that if you overlook anybody, you're bound (for a) setback."

In the off-season, he realized he'd had enough cutting weight.

"I just decided that I always wrestle better whenever I'm well-hydrated and



Mark Graves

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well-fed and I have my legs," said Graves, who is far more slender than some of the musclemen he faces.

"I don't think I lack strength. It's not that big of a deal. I try to avoid people's strengths and counteract their strengths by using technique more, use my moves and have my wind in the third period.

"I've always tried to think out my

problems. As you know, I've never been the strongest guy out there. I use what is available to me, the tools given to me. I was definitely not given strength."

As usual, second-ranked Mater Dei is the overwhelming favorite to win the SIAC team title. No. 14 Castle, No. 17 Memorial and Reitz are expected to contend for second place.

"I don't think anybody has got a shot at (Mater Dei)," Mattingly said. "I don't. Any of the other seven schools would gladly take second to them in that tournament."

A co-captain of Memorial's football team, Graves is considering following his brother to Northwestern. He has been in contact with the wrestling coaches at Northwestern and Harvard.

"Of course, he's my greatest practice partner," Mark said of Chris, who ad-

vanced to semistate at 215 as a senior but did not continue his wrestling career after Memorial. "There's nothing like a brother in the room to light a fire underneath you. Some of the most intense matches I've ever had have probably been with him because losing to your brother is just unacceptable."

His brother, now a senior in college, served as a volunteer assistant at Memorial over Christmas break. His father, Mark, is involved in nuclear and internal medicine.

"I've worked hard and always tried to do my best," said Mark Jr. "That's what my parents encouraged me to do, my best and nothing more. Wrestling complements just about everything and the values I've learned from it: discipline and hard work and endurance. It really does carry over into schoolwork."

Mark Jr. Article



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