



Kyle, the Friendly Giant

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Growing up in the 60's and 70's, kids were familiar with a children's show called "The Friendly Giant." The show was "smaltzy" and pedantic, but it was focused on the fantasy of a giant who was gentle enough to come into your living room and play with your kids for a half hour every day. It could have been about Warren Mott's 285 lb varsity wrestler, Sophomore Kyle Gray.

Gray's smile is dimpled and shy. He looks soft and friendly. People take an instant liking to him and his friendly demeanor. That is Kyle Gray off the mat. On the mat it's a different story... On the mat, the inner demons that he keeps tucked away come to the fore and Gray becomes a terror to all those who do not wear the Maroon and Gold. Decked out in Mott's new black singlet, adorned with the Marauder skull and crossbones, Gray transforms from a friendly giant to a fearsome force to be reckoned with.

Gray's transformation comes in a matter of moments these days. In the time it takes him to snap up his head gear and step on the mat, he goes from Gentle Giant to Raging Bull. That tenacity paid dividends this weekend, as Gray went 5-0 to pace the Marauder wrestlers at the Norsemen Invitational at Grosse Pointe North. Gray exacted some revenge by pinning Dan Wolford of DeLaSalle, who had bested him at Fitzgerald's Spartan Invitational last weekend. Gray was also one of only three winners for Mott against a very tough Dearborn Annapolis team.

Head Coach Gary Skop had nothing but praise for Gray after Saturday's competition. "Kyle is quickly emerging as one of the up and coming talents on our team. He is only a sophomore, but he is quickly becoming a leader for us. He still has moments where his youth reveals itself, but if he keeps working hard I would bet that he will be on the podium at the Palace in the next couple of years." Of course, the "podium at the Palace" is a reference to the State Tournament where All-State wrestlers receive their awards.

Other grapplers wrestling with distinction this weekend were Senior Captains Dan Salyers (145), Scott Riley (135) and Devon Williams (189). All three finished with 4-1 records for the meet. Coach Skop was also particularly pleased with the efforts of Senior Grant Cobb (160) and Freshman Tony Perryman (130).

As a team the Marauders finished with a 2-3 record. Given that the team was forfeiting 4 of the 14 weights due to injuries and personal conflicts, Skop was not completely displeased with the effort.

In other news, the JV Marauder Wrestlers competed at the Fitzgerald JV Invitational this weekend. Junior Steve Detkowski claimed first place at 285 lbs while Freshman Evan Pugh made huge strides on the season, winning second place in a large field of wrestlers.

The Marauders have a lengthy break before their next competition on January 29th when they travel to Marysville to take on host Marysville and LANse Creuse North. In the interim, on Sunday the team will travel to Central Michigan University, Coach Salyers' alma mater, where they will attend dual meets between nationally ranked CMU, Nebraska and Virginia Tech. CMU is currently ranked 6th in the country, while Nebraska is ranked 5th.