

NorCal Queens Wrestling Club wins California Greco State Wrestling Championship



Photo provided

Isabel Zabronsky, Camila Baxter, Piper Lalli, Coach Freeman, KT Thompson, Iris Fan, Patricia Davila Gil

By Jon Kingdon

After the Campolindo girls wrestling team finished 11th out of 70 teams at last year's North Coast Sectional Tournament, head coach Phil Freeman was already looking forward to next season in that he

was only graduating one senior. "Our girl's program is only getting better and better, and my goal is to eventually win it all," Freeman said.

Like so many other sports, Freeman has been coaching a number of girls from Campolindo on his off-season team,

the NorCal Queens Wrestling Club. In early June, for the second consecutive year, the team won the California Greco State Wrestling Championship. "We brought six wrestlers down to Fresno and they all came back with awards," Freeman said.

Five of the six girls go to Campolindo, and they competed at the Cadet (fresh/soph) and/or the Junior (junior/senior) level. Piper Laurie (152 - 1st junior), K.T. Thompson (132 - 2nd junior), Camila Baxter (142 - 2nd junior), Patricia Davila Gil (127 - 4th cadet/5th juniors) and Isabel Zabronsky (8th - junior). Iris Fan (122 - 3rd cadet/5th junior) attends Monte Vista High School and all will be competing next season.

Greco wrestling is used exclusively in the Olympics and outside of North America. It's a style that forbids holds below the waist and places an emphasis on throws because a

wrestler cannot use trips, nor can they hook or grab the opponent's leg to avoid being thrown.

Whereas during the wrestling season at Campolindo, Freeman's main focus is in getting the wrestlers in good cardiovascular shape, with the club team, there is much more teaching. "Greco is way more technical, making big, flashy moves and learning how to throw your opponents," Freeman said. "It's learning how to score with this new style for the wrestlers and it really translates over to the high school 'folk style' where you can use all of the moves and touch your opponent's legs."

Freeman was very forthcoming in his praise of the wrestlers: "It was great to see Piper on the top of the podium. I can all but guarantee she will earn her way into the state tournament next season. I was

proud of the way KT wrestled against tough competition and I expect to see her earn a section medal next season.

"Cammy has really improved and gotten stronger and anticipate her making it to the state tournament. As an upcoming sophomore, Patricia has been growing in leaps and bounds and I see great things from her in the future. Isabel suffered an injury in the tournament but continued to help me in coaching her teammates. Iris, who just began wrestling showed a lot of athleticism and was very coachable."

Freeman was once again prescient in his anticipation of the team's performance. "This is our second year in a row being the top junior girls Greco team in the state," Freeman said. "I told the girls that we were going to do it again, only bigger and better, and we did exactly that, winning by a larger margin than last year."

Ron Richison - coach, teacher, advisor and leader inducted into Hall of Fame

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He looked at me and picked up his whistle and said, 'You're right' and he blew the whistle and started making them do butterflies. We had some very good teams that eventually provided a lot of good players for the Acalanes varsity."

As Ron's son, Charles saw

up close the depth his father took in his coaching: "What was unique about my dad was that he didn't care if you were the best or the worst player, he was going to make you a better player. His ability to make the players better would make the practices better and the team better. For Dad, it was strength in numbers and he would have

more bodies to throw at his opponents. Water polo was like chess to my dad. He was able to think six moves ahead and he would know what you were going to do before you did it."

Just as he did as a coach, Richison was direct in his acceptance speech: "My family and I really appreciate all of you coming and I want to

thank my former athletes and coaches that wrote letters of support for me with this honor. I was very fortunate to have plenty of top athletes and support for the teams that I coached over 45 years and I appreciate all your efforts. Lastly, I want to thank my son for helping to coordinate all this video stuff and last but not

least, I want to thank my wife, Marilyn. We've been married almost 52 years and she is famous in her own right for her Mrs. R's Bars and there were many of our guys that had to have their Mrs. R's Bars before they could play."

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