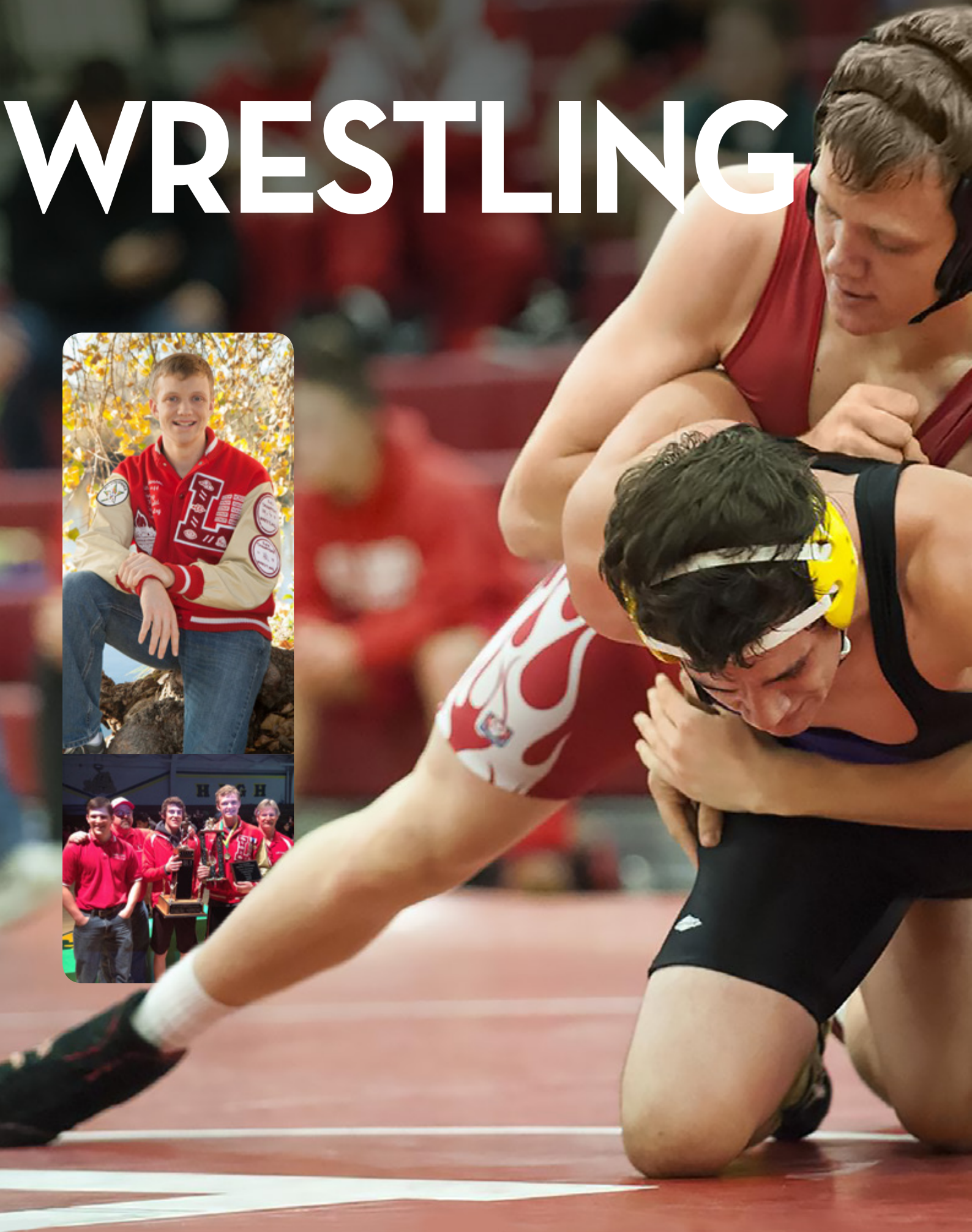


WRESTLING





with

As a team captain, this leader knew hazing wasn't the way to go.

A NEW APPROACH

By Drew Quinn
Church Magazines

The final whistle sounded, and Kyle* left the mat feeling discouraged about losing the match. Team captain Colin Anderson from California, USA, put his arm around Kyle and offered him a ride to get burgers with the rest of the team.

They sat in the restaurant parking lot while Colin listened to the freshman pour out his frustrations. Kyle had done well in middle school, but he was struggling with the switch to high school competition. Colin hadn't been very good as a freshman either, but he *had* kept trying. So he turned to his teammate and encouraged him: "Look, you're just a freshman. You have time. You'll do fine."

Encouraging his teammates was something Colin tried to do as often as he could. But it certainly wasn't the norm when he was coming up in the program.

By the time Colin reached his senior year and was made a cocaptain of his high school wrestling team, he'd worked hard and learned a lot. He'd begun "at the bottom of the food chain," kept his head down, and tried to improve. At that time the team was run like a boot camp, using fierce competitiveness and hazing to try to toughen the wrestlers and build camaraderie. But when it was his turn to lead, Colin knew that wasn't right. "I didn't feel I could do what had been done in the past."

Colin's mother often drove him to wrestling meets, and on the long drives they talked about his wrestling and the team. These conversations helped shape the idea of how Colin would lead if given the chance. "I decided to

lead in the Lord's way, as I'd learned in priesthood." When he was made a captain, he used encouragement, love, and persuasion to help his team members improve.

Things didn't turn around all at once. The coaches considered it a building year because the team was so young, with Colin and his cocaptain as the only seniors. The "building year" was evident early in the season, when a rivalry meet was a disaster. Afterward, Colin told his team, "I'm not angry at our loss. You don't have to win everything; you just have to give it your best."

From then on, the team worked together toward the same goal, and everything changed. They started building success. As he worked with and instructed others, Colin's own wrestling improved. "The greatest way to learn is to teach," he said. At the end of the season, the team won their league and sent seven wrestlers to postseason tournaments.

Looking back, Colin will always remember two things about his wrestling career. First, being a leader is really about service. "I didn't make state but it was a good year anyway, because my focus was on helping others; that helped me improve too."

Second, Colin learned that you can have a greater effect on others than you might ever suspect. "You have a great ability to shape how others see their experiences and to influence their perspective. Independent of the team and my own success, I will always remember Kyle and talking to him in the parking lot." True leadership really can have a lasting effect. **NE**

* Name has been changed.

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF IAN JONSSON/LODI NEWS SENTINEL AND ANNI KERR