Balint to wrestle for nation's top-ranked JC

Cordova High School wrestling standout Seth Balint went with his gut when he picked Clackamas Community College over a bunch of other schools.

He liked how the coach looked him in the eye.

He liked how current wrestlers gloated about the program.

He liked how Clackamas was the No. 1-ranked community college in the United States last season.

"I just had a vibe that this was a good thing," Balint said.

Balint made a name for himself after a super senior season in which he placed third at the ASAA Class 1-2-3A state tournament in Nikiski and sixth at the prestigious Reno Tournament of Champions in Nevada.

His strong showing at Reno, dubbed as the biggest, baddest tournament in the nation, piqued the interest of several college coaches. He was popular before, but his stock went through the roof after beating some of the best 145-pounders in the nation.

He was approached by many different coaches, although they all had the same shtick.

"Every school introduced themselves and acted like they were nice and everything," he said. "But when they were talking to me they were like looking around and trying to see other things. They weren't looking me in the eye, not really paying attention."

That wasn't the case with Josh Rhoden of Clackamas Community College.

"First impression: awesome," Balint said. "He looked me right in the eye."

He was also the best coach to correspond with Balint via email and text message.

"You could just tell he cares," he said.

Balint had arguably even more attractive opportunities from NCAA Division II schools, but he felt like he could make an impact right away at the JC level.

"I don't want to just go (to a big school) and get my butt kicked every day at practice. I want to actually wrestle," he said.

Clackamas, a two-year school, has produced 92 All-Americans and 13 National Champions since 1973.

"I want to be a part of that," Balint said. "I'm excited to go."

He hopes a strong career at Clackamas will catapult him to a major college, a road that has paid dividends for so many others over the years.

Balint already feels like a champion, thanks to the people of Cordova. The tight-knit community is proud that one of their own is advancing his career to the next level.

Some might say Cordova is a basketball town, including Balint who started at point guard on the hoops team. But he's helped put wrestling on the map too.

"Everybody has made me believe I can go out and do it," he said. "That's Cordova - this town always stands behind you."

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