

Athlete wrestles with family legacy

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As a third generation of wrestling excellence, Jamie Clark continues an award-winning legacy he inherited from his dad and grandfather.

Though a relative newcomer to the sport with half a year in, Clark was an athlete accustomed to discipline when he turned his eye to wrestling last year. He won gold in the 76 kg division at the Alberta Schools' Athletic Association provincials in Lethbridge in March, after placing second in the Wrestling Metro Championships.

The win was bittersweet in a way. Weeks before his provincial run, Wrestling Canada Lutte paid tribute to the passing of his grandfather, Don Clark, who in 2022 was given an Outstanding Contribution Award for his lifelong devotion to wrestling, not to mention his third-place national finish, when he missed an Olympic run by a match.

Don Clark was head coach of the Regina Cougars program, president of the Saskatchewan Amateur Wrestling Association (SAWA) and, in 1972, a founding member of Sask Sport — a coach of coaches in Canadian wrestling history.

Lessons from his legendary grandfather are everpresent for Jamie Clark.

"One of the big things he had to say was, 'You never win alone,' he said. "He was a strong believer you never win alone and you've always got to have a supporting team with you," he said.

Clark cites his parents Doug and Debra, teammates, friends, mentors and coaches as his support system.

Like many of his peers, Clark played football and hockey. To that mix, he added Brazilian jiu-jitsu and rugby.

But those four sports weren't enough. "Recently, I wanted to get into wrestling and to embrace all the opportunities it held, and the passion my family had had for wrestling," he said.

His high school didn't offer wrestling as a team sport, so Clark trains with



Bellerose Bulldog wrestler Jamie Clark celebrates semi-final win against Nikita Tsyruk of Grande Prairie Composite High School, to advance to ASAA Wrestling Provincial Championship match in Lethbridge, Alberta, on March 17.

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the Edmonton Wrestling Club as well as with the University of Alberta Golden Bears varsity team under the leadership of head coach Owen Dawkin.

"I sincerely appreciate it, because it can development me further as an athlete than most people get the chance to," he said.

"They're close-knit and hard workers, and we all push each other," he said. "Just being there makes me a better person, a better athlete, and hopefully, one day, a national champion."

In a nice bit of serendipity, it so happens Jamie Clark's father, Doug, once wrestled in the national final against Dawkins.

Now Jamie Clark represents his home school as a Bellerose Bulldog individually at meets, like the ASAA Wrestling Provincials, where he suffered a loss his

first match before battling back to win his next six, four by pin and one by technical superiority.

They were the lead-up to a grueling, down-to-the-wire final match that led to him claiming top spot on the podium in front of hundreds of spectators.

"It had a little bit of everything in it — it went the distance. It had some coaches' challenges, time outs, 'blood' timeouts," he said.

"There's nothing left out of the match, it was pretty much was a true display of what wrestling is and everything it had to offer."

Jamie Clark placed fifth in Wrestling Canada Lutte's 2023 Cadet Canadian Wrestling Championships in March.

His senior year of high school still lies ahead. Then the younger Clark plans

to study kinesiology at the U of A, and to wrestle with the team while he's at school. Eventually, he'd like to work as an occupational therapist or physical therapist.

Coach Dawkins believes Clark has what it takes to win in wrestling.

"I think it helped he's a pretty good athlete, he's played other sports. But wrestling is in his blood," Dawkins said.

Raw talent plus hard work have brought Clark along at a rocket pace.

"They've done a good job with him so far," Dawkins said. "His intensity and his work ethic is second to none ... He's always willing to work hard, he doesn't complain. You ask him to do something, it gets it done. And hard work and intensity is what gets it done."

"He doesn't shy away from hard work." ■

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