

Durant girls set their sights on state meet

By Paige Happ

Senior Lainey Shelangoski is striving to place in the top three in the upcoming girls' state wrestling tournament February 1-2 at the Xstream Arena in Coralville.

After placing eighth at the state tournament last year in the 105-pound weight bracket, Shelangoski begins her tournament run tomorrow and must finish in the top four in the super regional tournament in Cedar Rapids to advance to Coralville.

Shelangoski wants to be a regional champion in her 105-pound weight class this year.

After winning three matches and losing three at state last year, Shelangoski has experience and knows what to expect at the state tournament this year.

"It's one of the two tournaments that matter out of the whole year, so if you're gonna have a good day of wrestling, it's gotta be then, and you have to be ready because it's all or nothing," said Shelangoski, who is undefeated and ranked fourth in the state.

Sophomore wrestler Ava Streeter, who wrestles at 125 pounds, hopes to place in the top four at regionals and ultimately advance to the state tournament as well.

"Last year, I only won one match and was not very familiar with the sport," she said. "This year, I have more wins than losses and feel very confident with how I

wrestled in the beginning of the season."

"I have decided to change my mindset during practice too by telling myself the harder I work now, the easier it will be later," said Streeter.

Streeter has been mentally preparing herself by constantly surrounding herself with the thought of the state tournament.

"Before I do anything, I ask myself if this choice is going to help me get to state or if it is going to prevent me from going."

Jocelynn Richardson, a Wildcat freshman, hopes to reach the state tournament as well in the 130-pound weight bracket.

Richardson said she has been preparing by "working out almost every day, taking one day off a week, eating healthy, having high-intensity practices and keeping good grades, so I can wrestle."

All three Durant wrestlers continue to put in work outside of their school practices at the Sebolt Women's Wrestling Academy in Muscatine run by Samantha Sebolt.

Shelangoski has been wrestling for Sebolt for about a year and five months. Streeter started wrestling for the academy about ten months ago, and Richardson has been wrestling there for about a year and a half.

Practices for Sebolt occur three times a week: Tuesdays and Thursdays for

about an hour and a half after school practices are over and every Sunday for about three hours.

"On Tuesdays and Thursdays, I will go straight from school practice to Sebolt wrestling practice," said Streeter.

Although it can be tiring, Streeter enjoys the opportunity to keep practicing and improving.

"Wrestling for Sebolt has made a huge impact on my performance," said Streeter. "I spent all summer going to as many practices and tournaments as I could and working to become a better athlete."

Richardson said she has learned a lot of techniques at Sebolt that have helped her in several matches this season.

"I've gotten less tired during tough matches, and overall it's just made me a better wrestler on and off the mat," said Richardson.

Shelangoski said she is impressed by the dedication of the two underclassmen who put in back-to-back practices twice a week.

"I think it's cool to see that the girls that really want it will put in the extra work to accomplish their goals," said Shelangoski.

The face of girls' wrestling at Durant, Shelangoski has faced high expectations from both herself and her coaches for her senior season.



Photo contributed by Ava Streeter
Sophomore Ava Streeter wins a recent match.

"I set expectations for myself extremely high, and Coach Casey Strub and Coach Samantha Sebolt help hold me to them. I would say I don't really worry about pressure from anyone else," said Shelangoski.

"It feels really good to have hard work pay off, and that's exactly what I plan on doing again this year."

DeLong wraps up first year at Iowa with bowl trip



Photo contributed by Rebecca DeLong
Younger brother Jack DeLong watches the field at Kinnick Stadium while his brother Nolan (31) participates in warmups.

By Colby Gast

Waiting in the shadows of one of the nation's top college defenses, former Durant football standout Nolan DeLong can't wait for his sophomore year at the University of Iowa

"This place is a dream come true," said DeLong, a 2023 graduate who rewrote the record book during his four-year varsity career as a Wildcat. "This is what I've wanted to do my whole life, and it means the world to finally achieve it."

From summer workouts to in-season practices to the final bowl game, DeLong's redshirt freshman year at Iowa was quite the experience. The Hawkeyes finished the regular season with a 10-2 record, winning the West division of the Big Ten Conference.

DeLong's father and mother, Ross and Rebecca DeLong, attended home games at Kinnick Stadium this fall.

"Getting to watch him reach a goal

like this really makes his mother and I very happy," said his dad.

DeLong started low on the depth chart, as many freshmen do, but has been slowly moving his way up. He was in a handful of special teams plays throughout the season, so he will still have four years of eligibility left.

When DeLong joined the Hawkeyes, he had a little adapting to do.

"The intensity during a college practice is on a whole nother level," said DeLong. "It was honestly a huge difference, and something I definitely needed to get used to."

In practices, DeLong played on the scout team defense as a linebacker but also on the scout team offense as a running back. Practicing against the Hawks' starting offense and starting defense, DeLong loved the challenge it presented.

DeLong joined the football team as a preferred walk-on and started workouts

last summer in Iowa City as he was wrapping up his senior season on the Wildcat baseball team.

"The thing about a preferred walk-on at Iowa is that I get treated exactly like I'm on scholarship, and I'm given all the same benefits as the others," said DeLong. "That was a big selling factor in my original decision to play here."

Under the influence of 24-year head coach Kirk Ferentz, the longest tenured head football coach in the nation, DeLong felt the impact Coach Ferentz made after just one season of play.

"He is truly a class act," said DeLong. "It doesn't take you long being around him to realize how amazing of not only a coach he is but also a person!"

Defensive coordinator Phil Parker, who was chosen as the top assistant coach in the nation this season, and linebackers coach Seth Wallace were also big reasons DeLong chose Iowa, and their influence has made him support his decision even more.

"Seth Wallace makes being an Iowa linebacker special," said DeLong. "He's an amazing coach but an even greater man! One of the biggest reasons for coming to Iowa."

Although the Hawkeyes suffered a disappointing loss to the Tennessee Volunteers in the Citrus Bowl Jan. 1, the week leading up to the game was well worth it, according to DeLong, who said the Citrus

Bowl officials treated the players like family.

"Throughout the week, we had plenty of activities to keep us busy and even got to spend time with the kids around the area at a local amusement park," he said.

DeLong and the Hawkeyes also got some memorabilia to take home: a pair of shoes, a couple of sweatshirts, a speaker, a watch, a Yeti water bottle, and a backpack.

DeLong's first season has been filled with many memories on and off the field. DeLong lives in Petersen Residence Hall with some of his football teammates.

"I have met so many amazing people already that become my lifelong friends," he said.

DeLong said he's also very grateful for all the support back home.

"The community of Durant is the most supportive fan base of all time," DeLong said. "They give nothing but love to both my family and I."

Growing up in Durant, DeLong dreamed of playing for the Hawkeyes ever since he was little, his dad said, recalling a time Nolan went to his first game at Kinnick Stadium. He was in awe watching the warmups, the marching band playing, and especially the players walking out in a "swarm" to AC/DC's "Back in Black."

Then nine-year-old Nolan looked up to his dad and said, "I'm going to play here someday."



Photo contributed by Ross DeLong
Nolan DeLong is pictured with his father Ross DeLong and his mother Rebecca DeLong.