

The First Family of Wrestling

The Hinebauch brothers have been a dominant force on the Havre wrestling scene for a long, long time

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Eight years ago, a young student-athlete named Evan Hinebauch walked into the halls of Havre High School for the first time. While Hinebauch was already known as a standout wrestler and a potentially very good football player, on that first day of school, no one could have predicted the legacy that was to come.

Eight years later Hinebauch, a senior at Montana State University-Northern is putting the finishing touches on one of the most illustrious careers in Havre wrestling history. But the legacy isn't his alone. Hinebauch has also watched younger brother Ethan also go through four years in the HHS wrestling program, then come to MSU-Northern where he's currently a redshirt-freshman.

And it didn't end with Ethan either.

The youngest of a total of four Hinebauch brothers born to Randy and Lisa Hinebauch, Eli is currently wrapping up a brilliant wrestling career of his own in a Blue Pony singlet. Eli is on his way to the All-Class State Tournament Friday and Saturday in Billings where he is heavily favored to add another medal to the Hinebauch house – a house that has so much wrestling gold, it should be called the Fort Knox of the Hi-Line.

All of the Hinebauch brothers who've competed for Havre High were home schooled until high school. And they all have wrestling in their veins. They all have different personalities, but they come from a hard-working family and that's always carried over into their success on the mat. It's been said by many that you'd be hard-pressed to find anyone who will outwork a Hinebauch on the mat, or anywhere else for that matter.

And while they all have different demeanors and each has become his own man, the three have plenty in common. They are wrestlers, they have been stars and they have each succeeded. They all three came up the high school ranks under veteran HHS head coach Scott Filius, and he also thinks they are natural leaders – in the wrestling room and outside of it.

"It has been really rewarding working with them, because they are good people, they compete and do everything you ask as a coach," Said Filius, who's coached the Hinebauch's to six individual state titles between them. "If you ask them to work harder they do, if you ask them to show up extra, they do, and if you ask them to be leaders, then they will. They are just great kids, and that is a tribute to their family. They expect their kids to work hard and it shows."

And this is a special and unique time for the Hinebauch's.

When Eli's season ends, most likely with yet another state championship this weekend in Billings, it will be the last time that all three brothers will be wrestling competitively at the



MSU-Northern senior Evan Hinebauch will wrestle his final home match tonight. In a month, he will finish his amazing career at the NAIA national tournament. Next fall will be the first time Hinebauch won't wrestle competitively in Havre in eight years.



Ethan Hinebauch, who has been wrestling with his brothers the most, at both MSU-N and HHS, will continue to carry the torch.



Brothers Eli (left), Ethan (middle) and Evan Hinebauch have been a staple in wrestling on the Hi-Line, whether it was in Chinook as youths, in high school as Havre Blue Ponies, or MSU-Northern Lights, there's been at least one Hinebauch wrestling in the area for over a decade now. And since Eli's freshman year at HHS, the trio has been wrestling together making it a true family affair.

same time. Eli will go on and wrestle in college, and Ethan has three years of eligibility left after this season, but Evan, the one who started it all in Havre eight years ago, his magical career is finally coming to a close. He'll wrestle his final home match tonight when the Great Falls Argos come to Havre to battle the Lights. Then, he'll start his postseason quest for a second national championship.

It's a sad time to think that Evan's career will be over soon, but rest assured, with what he started all those years ago, the Hinebauch legacy isn't going anywhere any time soon.

Evan bursts onto the scene

In reality, Evan Hinebauch was already well on his way to wrestling stardom when he arrived at Havre High. During his freshman season in Chinook, Hinebauch placed at the Class B-C state tournament while watching Eric, the oldest of the four, capture a dramatic state title of his own.

In fact, Eric, who went on to wrestle at UGF, along with the encouragement of their parents, really paved the way for all of the Hinebauch success in wrestling.

"We really got into wrestling because we were home schooled," Evan Hinebauch said. "It was really the only sport we could participate in when we were younger. My parents just took us to Chinook and let us wrestle and I know we really loved it right away. That's really where it all started."

And while wrestling may not have been in the Hinebauch's DNA from birth, it sure seems like it. And it quickly got into their hearts.

Evan certainly took it and ran with it.

He made the decision to transfer to Havre for his sophomore season, not because of anything that was lacking in Chinook, but because of an opportunity to perhaps compete against a level of competition he might not have gotten in the Class B-C ranks.

For Evan, and his younger brothers, the rest is history.

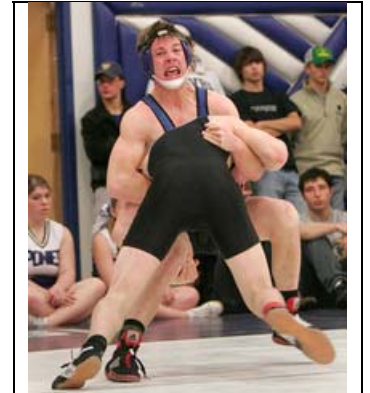
"The first thing I'd say is, Perry Miller (longtime Chinook head coach) is a great coach and has meant a lot to me and my career," Hinebauch said. "But I do think moving to Havre was big for my wrestling, really because I got the chance to wrestle the top competition all season long. Being able to do that, and have the chance to wrestle for Scott (Filius), it was really big for me."

Big is an understatement.

Evan took Class A by storm, winning three straight state championships, and losing just one match in his final two seasons as a Blue Pony. In his time at HHS, Hinebauch helped the Ponies and Filius establish the premier program in Class A wrestling and one of the top programs in all of Montana. For good measure, he also shined on the football field as well.

He also had the opportunity to wrestle with younger brother Ethan, and like Evan learning from Eric, the torch continued to get passed on.

"It's been a fun ride, learning from Evan," Ethan Hinebauch said. "You really can't help but learn from him because when you're around him every day, you see the goals he sets and how he reaches them. He just makes you want to work harder."



Havre High senior Eli Hinebauch (back) is wrapping up a brilliant high school career this weekend at the Class A state tournament in Billings. Hinebauch is the fourth of four brothers to already have won at least one high school state championship.

"It was a privilege to watch his senior year," he added. "Forty eight pins in 49 matches and the other was a technical fall. That's a pretty amazing year."

As captivating as his senior year was, Evan Hinebauch wasn't done, not by a long stretch. He went on to redshirt at Northern and now, in his senior season, he's a three-time NAIA All-American. And just last March, he added another chapter to an already amazing story by winning the 184-pound NAIA national title. It doesn't get much better than a Northern wrestler, who wrestled for Havre High and was born on the Hi-Line, reaching that ultimate goal.

And his family was there to share it with him. After all, when it comes to the Hinebauch's wrestling is a family affair.

"It was great to be there and watch him (Evan) win a national championship, with our whole family there," Ethan said. "I think me and my mom and dad were as nervous as he was. It was something really special."

Evan's entire career has been special. From state championship and national titles, to his epic matches with UGF rival and former Malta prep star Michael French, to passing the torch to Ethan and Eli, the word special doesn't begin to describe the ride Evan's been on.

"It's been fun and it's been an honor to coach Evan," MSU-N head coach Tyson Thivierge said. "I know I've learned as much from him as I hope he's learned from me."

"The great thing about Evan is he's got something you can't coach. He's got an incredible will to win," he continued. "He's an incredible talent, he's a great athlete and a great wrestler, but he also has an ungodly will to win and that's something that's been contagious in our program. And he is a big part of the overall growth of our program because of that will to win and what he has meant to this team."

Along comes Ethan

With two older brothers already listed in the annals of Montana high school wrestling history, it would have been easy for Ethan Hinebauch to rest on his name. But that's not in his, or any of the Hinebauch's nature.

Ethan came to Havre High with lofty expectations, part of an already loaded Blue Pony program, and part of a family that was already at the top of the wrestling mountain.

And all he did is keep the legacy going. Ethan went to work, placing third at the Class A state tournament as both a freshman and sophomore, then he won back-to-back state championships to close out his career.

More hardware for the Hinebauch Fort Knox.

"Ethan came to Havre and did great things," Evan Hinebauch said. "That was great to see because I'm sure he felt some pressure, following Eric and me. But he's always been a real hard worker and it shows in the way he wrestles. He goes out and is aggressive for seven minutes every time he's on the mat. That's just how he is. He never stops and it's worked well for him."

Well enough that now Ethan is a teammate of Evan's again. Ethan is currently ranked fourth in the NAIA at 165 pounds and is already pushing towards adding to the Hinebauch legacy at Northern. After taking a year off from wrestling to attend the Montana Wilderness School of the Bible in Augusta, Ethan had his freshman season cut short by a knee injury.

Now however, he's back in good form and once again following the path Evan already set at Northern, albeit in his own way.

"Ethan and Evan share the same mentality when it comes to winning," Thivierge said. "They just don't quit. Their will to win is just amazing. And what's really incredible is, sometimes wrestlers don't have that type of will to win at all, let alone one. But they have it in their entire family. It's really special, and Ethan has it and I think he's going to have a great career at Northern."

The not so little brother

If expectations were high for Ethan when he arrived at Havre High, then they might have felt like the Mount Everest of expectations to Eli Hinebauch years later. But instilled with the will to win, and the family's work ethic, it wasn't a question of IF Eli would succeed, but more so, how much and how soon.

"Eli followed three older brothers," Ethan Hinebauch said. "And I'm sure he's felt some pressure with that. But it definitely hasn't shown. He's the defending state champion, he's only lost once in the last two years and is he's had great accomplishments in high school."

Eli's accomplishments include a pair of heartbreaking second-place finishes at the Class A state tournament before breaking through last season and adding yet more gold to the family Fort Knox. Now he's gunning for a second state title and planning on a collegiate wrestling career, just like all of his brothers before him.

Again, it's a family affair.

"I felt a little pressure my first two years," Eli said. "It was hard not to with all the records both of them (Evan and Ethan) have. But now I've changed my view on it. Now, I want to be able to go to them and say, I didn't just do what you guys did, I want to be able to say I was the best. I want to take it to the next level.

"But it's been great growing up and having them to learn from and look up to," he added. "I didn't get to wrestle with Evan in high school but I grew up watching him and being around everything he did. Wrestling with Ethan was special. It's special getting to have brothers like them and getting to watch everything they've accomplished."

And while Eli has watched all his older brothers accomplish great things, they've watched him too. And he's done the job of not only carrying on the Hinebauch legacy on the mat, but off it too. He's not only a winner, a great wrestler and a tremendous athlete, like his brothers before him, he's a leader.

"Every single one of them was a leader in their own way, and when they come in they make everybody around them better," Filius said.

Winding Down

This weekend in Billings will mark the end of having a Hinebauch wrestling for the Blue Ponies as Eli wrestles at his final Class A state tournament. And less than a month from now, three will become two as Evan ends his brilliant career which has spanned eight years in Havre, and even longer between Chinook, Havre and Northern.

It's the end of an era for Evan, and it's the end of the Hinebauch era at Havre High too. But the Hinebauch legacy is surely in good hands.

"It will be a new experience not wrestling with Evan anymore," Ethan said. "Evan is a great leader. He's pushed me and he's pushed Eli. But he's served his time wrestling in Havre and when he's done, it will be time for new leaders to step up and carry the torch, just like he did.

"It will be a weird transition for me," Thivierge added. "Not having Evan in our room, in the program, honestly it's not something I've wanted to think about. He's been there every day. He's been a leader, he's made his teammates better and he's made our program better. It's going to be tough not having him around anymore. He's meant that much to me and our program.

"For me it has been really rewarding, and it is kind of neat to see him wrestle at my alma mater and have him close enough to be able to watch some of his matches," Filius said. "In fact, we already have

reservations to watch him compete at nationals in a couple of weeks. It has been fun to watch him grow up and develop into the person he is. He is just a tough, tough human being and that is always fun to work with people like that."

That's high praise for the Hinebauch, who at least in Havre started it all. Evan paved the way for Ethan and Eli and both have come through door, carried on the family wrestling legacy and made their own way as well. While they are all dominant wrestlers, they've all had their own success stories and that's what makes them truly: Havre's First Family of Wrestling.

"It's been great," Evan Hinebauch said. "It's been a privilege to wrestle for three great programs, Chinook, Havre High and Northern. It's going to be sad when it's all over. Even wrestling my last match against UGF in Havre, it's going to be pretty emotional.

"But, things always come to an end eventually," he added. "It's been a great time with all of my brothers, competing with them, getting to watch them have success. It's just been a great ride and a lot of fun. It's really pretty special to be able to do all this, but to do it with your family, that's been pretty amazing."