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Cardinal roots helped wrestler take title

AUBURN HILLS
THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION
 Monday, March 19, 2007
 By **Scott Keyes**
 sports@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6184

AUBURN HILLS - Paul Donahoe hopped on an airplane Sunday morning heading back to Lincoln, Neb.

Not before sharing his national championship win with his friends and family that made the trip from Davison to relish in his victory.

Donahoe had at least 100 friends and family members in attendance, watching the Cornhusker take down No. 1 seed at 125-pounds, Sam Hazewinkel of Oklahoma Saturday night, with a huge 3-1 overtime win during the NCAA wrestling championships at The Palace of Auburn Hills.

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In two previous meetings with Hazewinkel, the Sooner had his way with Donahoe winning 12-3, three weeks ago in the Big 12 tournament, and 5-0 at last year's NCAA quarterfinals.

By upsetting Hazewinkel in front of the hometown crowd, Donahoe got a sweet taste of redemption. It tasted a little sweeter knowing he just beat one of the best in his home state, not to mention winning at The Palace, a place that has been very good to him over the years.

Of those in attendance was Donahoe's former Davison coach Roy Hall. Donahoe said Hall was a big reason why he is a national champion.

"I came back home to Davison during the holidays not feeling really good about myself, and it was coach Hall that told me to get my butt over to the gym because he wanted to work on a few things," Donahoe said.

"That's just coach Hall. He always knows when things aren't going so well, but he got me refocused and my mind back on wrestling. I owe him a lot."

Hall called Donahoe and Nebraska coach Mark Manning Saturday morning, wishing them the best in what has been their biggest match to date.

"Coach Hall called Paul and told him how proud he was of him. That really meant a lot," Manning said. "Roy molded Paul into a champion. We just had to do a little fine tuning along the way. Man I couldn't be happier. This couldn't happen to a better kid."

However, one person that wasn't there, but his presence was definitely felt, was Chase Metcalf. Metcalf, who died in a car accident Sept. 8, 2005, was a true inspiration to Donahoe all season long. After Donahoe's semifinal win, he dedicated his victory to Metcalf, and after winning the national championship, his focus once again turned to Chase.

Choking back tears, Donahoe praised the memory of his fallen friend and teammate.

"I prayed to Chase Friday night asking for strength and asking him to help me through my match," Donahoe said. "Growing up, Chase was someone all of us wrestlers at Davison looked up to, and I just want people to know what a huge influence he had on me. I know he was there cheering me to victory. That's just Chase."

The championship instinct was in instilled in Donahoe long before Saturday night's victory. It's something all Davison wrestlers have been dedicated to during their tenure as a Cardinal.

Donahoe finally gave Hall his first national champion and All-American wrestler all in the same

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season.

"I owe a lot of the people, including my parents and friends, a great deal of gratitude, as they have supported me greatly over the years," Donahoe said. "This national championship is for them."

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