

Roberts, Andreoni Awarded 2017 Michael Jackson Scholarship

MAX ANDREONI AND JOEY ROBERTS were awarded the Michael Jackson Wrestling Scholarship July 18 at Woodford County High School. The winners are pictured with the board and attending family members. Front, from left, are Gavin Andreoni, Becky Andreoni, Max Andreoni, Joey Roberts, Toni Roberts, Jonathan Roberts, and Betty Galvan; back row, wrestling coach Rusty Parks Jr., Wyatt Andreoni, Mike Andreoni, Debbie Jackson, Joe Carr Sr., Rusty Parks, Tim Roberts, Janina Roberts, Joe Carr Jr., and Randy Cotton. (Photo by Bill Caine)



By Bill Caine - Woodford Sun Sports

The annual Michael Jackson Wrestling Scholarship was awarded July 18 at a ceremony held at the Woodford County High School library.

Jackson was a standout wrestler for Woodford County from 1996 to 2000, where he won numerous awards, including winning the 135-pound division in the state high school wrestling championship during his senior season. Jackson was fatally injured in a car accident in 2002 and his family and the scholarship board award a scholarship in his name each year.

This year was the first time the board awarded two scholarships. Joey Roberts and Max Andreoni were the recipients of the 2017 Michael Jackson Wrestling Scholarship.

“This was a unique year to the board,” said board member Joe Carr Jr. “We felt both these young men were reflective of what Michael Jackson stood for. They have a great work ethic, character both inside and out of the wrestling room. These young men model good behavior and they loved wrestling. These are all things that Michael Jackson loved. And these pieces are what we made our decision from.”

Max Andreoni has been wrestling since he was roughly five years old and fell in love with the sport instantly.

“Max set a fantastic example for the rest of the team,” said Coach Rusty Parks Jr. “When Max or Joey entered the wrestling room, the other kids knew it was time to get serious and get to work.”

Andreoni hit a rough patch in his wrestling career and doubted whether he wanted to wrestle again.

“I took a big break after my junior year and did some soul searching,” said Andreoni. “One day everything clicked and I got on a roll and never stopped. I feel so blessed to meet that goal that I worked so hard for.”

Andreoni celebrated an undefeated season by winning the state championship at 182 pounds.

Roberts moved to Woodford County with the sole purpose of wrestling for the high school team. Roberts, with the support of his family, knew that he wanted to wrestle at a young age. The family decided to come to Woodford because of its reputation as a perennial powerhouse in the state. Roberts fulfilled one of his biggest dreams this past season by winning the state championship at 145 pounds.

“Just to mentioned in the same sentence as Michael Jackson is very humbling,” said Roberts. “The stories I have been told have explained how he was a great young man that everyone admired.”

Roberts is headed to the United States Air Force and is currently awaiting orders for training.

“I’ve had so many great role models in my life from my dad to my coaches and everyone who has helped me along the way to get here.”

Roberts embraced the reputation that Woodford’s wrestling team had.

“When you represent Woodford, and you walk into the gym, and people see the black and gold, they want to beat you so badly,” said Roberts. “So many great names like Michael Jackson have come before me to make that reputation known throughout the state.”

“These two young men have meant so much to this program,” said Parks. “They have led this team to back-to-back top five finishes, and both were senior state champions. I’ve known Max since he was a little kid and Max has always been strong willed. He was never afraid and welcomed a challenge. That mentality serves you well in wrestling.

“Joey did not grow up here... but we knew him because he was with a quality program out of Lexington, so we certainly knew who he was.”

Parks will have some gaps to fill losing two state champions but is hoping the example these two wrestlers have set will spark new leaders to step forward.

“We seek leaders in the classroom first and on the mat second,” said Parks. “We want the kids to push themselves academically and be the kid that isn’t afraid to sit in the front of the class. That’s a leader right there. Kids like Max and Joey never took a day off in their lives, and that will lead them to greatness in life.”