

April 21, 2021

Thank you for taking your time and inviting me here today. My name is Harris Meekhof, I am a freshman at Allendale High School. I have been wrestling since I was four years old and it is my favorite sport.

Last fall I gave up football to focus on wrestling. I started practicing 4 to 5 days a week beginning in August. I traveled to nine tournaments in Iowa, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, and South Carolina. I wrestled in 51 matches in preparation for my first wrestling season at Allendale High School as a freshman. Whenever I had hard practices or matches, I told myself that this hard work was for the team and the state tournament.

High School wrestling finally started in February and all my hard work paid off. My record was 32-7. Our team got to go to team state where we made it to the semi-finals. I took second in the individual district and regional tournament. I lost to the same wrestler by 2 points and then 1 point. He eventually took third at the state championship.

Three hours before my weigh-in for the individual state tournament, my coaches told me and another one of my teammates, Cris Perez, that we could not wrestle. They said we were contact traced from the wrestlers that we wrestled at the team state semifinals. Even though we had just tested negative, our coaches told us there was nothing we could do. We both tested negative two days prior when we wrestled that team. Two days later we tested negative and they tested positive. This made no sense to me. I did not know what to do so I went home and worked out. The next day I watched the tournament online. I was projected to take seventh at state by Michigan Grappler. Everything I worked so hard for was taken from me. My goal of being Allendale's first four-time state placer was gone.

The wrestlers that Cris and I were contact traced to, also wrestled Lowell at the team finals. Lowell's wrestlers wrestled in the individual state tournament while Cris and I watched. I tested five times over ten days after I was told I could not wrestle. All of them were negative.

My teammates Cris Perez and Andrew Hollenbeck are both seniors. They will never get another chance. At least I have three more years but I want to make sure that no other wrestler has to experience what my teammates and I had to this year.

*Harris Meekhof*