



Seras And Herman: Not All Winners Are Alike

by Larry Kahn

"The common denominator of all great athletes is that they take a special pleasure in winning." — Joe DeMeo

The two figures on the wrestling mats paw at each other strategically, each one looking for an advantage — an opportunity to draw first blood. Andy Seras, wrestling at 134 pounds for Albany, scores with a takedown.

"Let's go A.J.," a voice calls out from the bleachers. "Come on babe."

SPORTS FEATURE

Seras methodically selects his moves, using every part of his body to manipulate his opponent. He leads 5-2 as the first period ends.

"Come on A.J.," the voice yells.

Seras sets up his prey, scoring seemingly at will. He works with the coolness and quickness of a cat, totally in control. The score is now 8-2.

"Come on, do your thing."

It's all over, Seras wins, 9-3 — one of the closer matches he's been in since the early part of the season.

The voice in the sparse crowd falls silent, and his mother Sheila Seras returns to her embroidery, scarcely aware of the meet continuing below.

About half an hour later, another gruffer voice swings into action as Charles Herman shouts encouragement and advice to his son, Vic, who appears to be struggling at the moment. The 177 pounder never really gets warmed up, and loses for one of the few times all season, 7-1.

These scenes repeat themselves twice more in the afternoon with Seras taking all three of his matches easily, and Herman winning his next two convincingly. It's a typical day for these two local boys. Seras extended his record setting undefeated string and Herman added two satisfying victories despite a rare blemish on his record.

Both of these outstanding athletes have risen to the top on a very young and inexperienced

"They are both outstanding athletes with a feeling for excellence. They have confidence in themselves and when they go out on the mat they know they can win. They like to get their hand raised," said Albany head wrestling coach Joe DeMeo, the man most responsible for bringing them to Albany.

Seras particularly carries with him a long winning tradition. Besides a record shattering season which saw him go 16-0-1 in dual meets this year (36-5-1 overall), the second best record in the history of wrestling at Albany, the freshman has a long list of credentials.

As a schoolboy wrestler at Niskayuna High in Schenectady he

"I think I'm definitely one of the eight best, there's no doubt in my mind about that," Seras said sounding a little bit cocky but in all sincerity. "I'm pretty sure I'm going to be All-American, it's just whether or not I'm going to be there at the right time to be the champion this year."

"He could be in the top three in the country," DeMeo agreed. "He expects to be there and I think I expect him to be there, too."

Unlike Seras, Herman did not gain national recognition while attending Linton High, also in Schenectady. Although an exceptional leader and a standout wrestler his list of high school

and I think I'll do well. I think I'm starting to reach my peak just at the right time."

And just at the right time it is. The SUNYAC tournament begins today and is the stepping stone to Nationals. The top four wrestlers in each weight class plus one wild card will represent the SUNYAC at John Carroll University in two weeks.

"The SUNYAC is the toughest conference in the nation in wrestling Division III. We are to Division III as the Big Ten is to Division I. It's so much tougher," commented DeMeo.

"SUNYACs, I think I can win, but it's not one of my goals," Herman pointed out. "I want to win

victory and attention — to know he's the best. He reminds you a little of Joe Namath, in his own 134 pound way.

"An athlete is a showman, really," he said. "I don't gloat about it, but it's a nice feeling."

Herman also looks to the future for bigger and better things, but he is more modest and cautious than Seras. Yet there is a quiet confidence that you feel when you talk to him.

"Long term, I want to be the best guy in the country, overall, over all divisions," he offered, and said that he would also like to compete in the 1988 Olympics before settling down into a career.

"Right now, realistically, I'm very far down the line (from a World Championship). I'm hoping that I can progress and get a shot to be that good.

"I think I'm going along the right path," he continued. "I'm wrestling every day of the year, and if I keep working all year round, I'll be good enough to be up there."

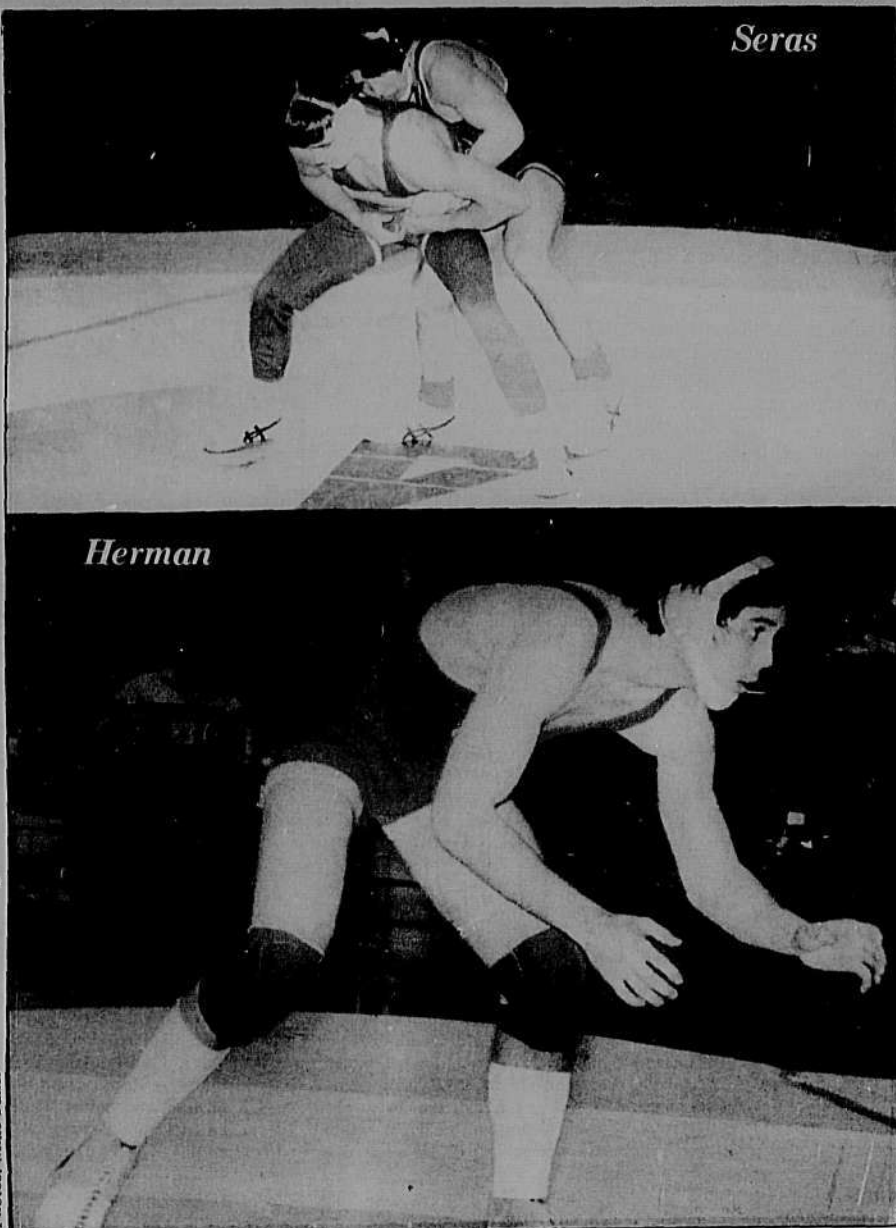
An important difference between Herman and Seras is their attitude toward the team. They both enjoy wrestling for Albany, but for Seras it is just a means toward an ultimate end while for Herman it can be an end in itself.

"When it comes right down to it your out there for yourself," said Seras. "I'm conscious of the team, but it's not even me and the team — it's a pretty good separation."

"I think the main reason I wrestle or the main reason I enjoy it is being on a team and having that special comradeship that you have with your teammates. That really means a lot to me," Herman remarked in contrast.

And his leadership and motivational ability as captain of the team has not gone unnoticed by his teammates or DeMeo. He's very well respected by his fellow athletes," DeMeo noted. "He's been a good leader and a help to the coach. He's one of the most outstanding athletes I've had the pleasure of working with."

Each one has made it through a



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—Andy Seras

Albany wrestling team and have emerged as leaders by example. Each has exhibited the characteristics of a true champion — hard work, persistence, consistency and a certain intangible quality which sets all champions above the rest. Each is also rapidly approaching one of their goals, the goal of every collegiate wrestler, a goal attained by only five Albany wrestlers before them — All-American status, and possibly a national championship. But, most importantly, each is a winner.

had a 90-13 career record and was a phenomenal 35-2 in his senior year. He won the 1979-80 National AAU Elite Division Championship, was 1980 Outstanding Wrestler in that tournament, seventh in the Senior Division National AAU Tournament, fourth in the World Championships (despite an injury, and still only losing to the defending two-time champ), five-time New York State champion and the list goes on.

Both Seras and DeMeo are confident that the former will become Albany's first freshman All-American, and there's no reason to doubt them — he has lost to only one Division III wrestler this year and that was in a match in which he was wrestling far above his usual weight.

honors doesn't go past Class A Sectional champion in his senior year, a year in which he went 30-2 (75-25 career).

He has met with even greater success at Albany. Last year, as a freshman, Herman went 15-3 in duals (30-9 overall) and qualified for the Nationals, barely missing All-American status with a ninth place finish (the top eight are All-American).

This season, as the team captain, he slipped to 15-5 in duals (35-11 overall), but many of those losses were early in the year when he was still recovering from a bout with mononucleosis. He has been hot of late.

"I think I'm starting to peak now this season — finally," said Herman. "Now I'm completely healthy

the Division III National Championship."

Ultimately, both wrestlers have higher aspirations, and with the effort and determination that they put into wrestling there doesn't appear to be anything in their way.

"My goal for Andrew is for him to be good enough to beat anybody in the country. I don't like to set any limits," DeMeo remarked.

"Potentially I could be a world champion," Seras said, and added, "I know enough technique right now to be a world champion. I just need to polish it and do maybe twenty of the techniques I know so I can do them perfectly every time — and that takes time and practice."

Seras is good and he knows it, but he exudes confidence rather than braggadocio. He is hungry for

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—Vic Herman

different route, but they have both made it, and there is one thing that keeps them going.

"Winning is my life right now. All my training and everything is for that ultimate win," Seras reflected.

"I spent a lot of time losing and I paid my dues early," Herman observed. "The more I lost the more determined I was to win, and I wasn't going to stop wrestling until I could win all the time — I'm very competitive as far as that's concerned. I like to win."