

CALEB WOOD DETERMINED TO GET STATE MEET REDEMPTION

by [Rich McGowan](#) | Mar 6, 2019 | [Boys Wrestling](#)



(Above, Caleb Wood pins Edison's Jackson Berardi in just 18 seconds in a match earlier this season.)

FREMONT – He's tried to forget it, but mention it to him, and the look on Caleb Wood's face is clearly one of disgust.

Wrestling in the consolation bracket of last year's state tournament, Wood was initially whistled for a potentially dangerous move. But after the opposing coach objected, the referees reversed their decision and ruled it an illegal move.

Because Wood's opponent was injured and unable to continue, Wood's tournament ended in disqualification.



Caleb Wood

It's a result that still tastes bitter.

"I ran (the move) all season. I ran it all season this season, and I've never been called for it," Wood said. "I've mostly tried to let it go. It was a one-time thing."

But as he prepares to return to Ohio State University's Schottenstein Center for the Division I state tournament, Wood has his sights set on redemption.

"For sure. Definitely want to make it further than I did last year."

Wrestling in the 195-pound bracket, Wood (35-9) will wrestle his first match Thursday evening against Springboro's Jacob Kowalski (42-2).

Ross wrestling coach Chad Hetrick said the match against Kowalski is winnable if Wood brings his highest level of focus.

“Looking at the projections, one of them has (Wood) beating his first kid, and the other doesn’t,” Hetrick said. “If Caleb comes out there aggressive, with an attitude, I think he can beat him. It’s up to him and how he wants to perform.” If Wood moves past Kowalski, it’ll likely set up a second-round match with one of the bracket’s favorites, 46-1 freshman Seth Shumate from Dublin Coffman. In preparation for the tournament, Wood has been practicing this week at Genoa Area High School, where other state qualifiers from across the area are meeting to train against top-flight competition.

“I’m wrestling (against) a variety of different styles,” he said. “I’m getting a look at everything at the moment.”

While he’s setting his aim for the medal podium, Wood is trying not to think about the tournament signaling the end of his wrestling career.

“It hasn’t kicked in yet,” he said. “It won’t kick in until (the tournament). It’s kind of crazy for sure.

“It’s nothing to go crazy over in my mind because, no matter what, I’m still wrestling somebody,” he said of the tournament. “Got to go toe-to-toe with somebody. This week I’m not trying to go super-hard, just small, technique-type stuff.”

CALEB WOOD CLOSES WRESTLING CAREER WITH SEVENTH-PLACE FINISH AT STATE MEET

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COLUMBUS – Caleb Wood did not know if he could continue, and the notion of forfeiting due to injury loomed large.

But he'd never quit anything before, so doing so in the Division I state wrestling tournament would be an odd time to start.

"I was hurting really bad after that match," Wood said. "I did not want to wrestle. But I talked to my coaches and my parents, and they said, 'Caleb, you've never quit anything in your life. There is no point in not going out there and giving it your all. No matter win or lose, show the kind of person you are.'"



Caleb Wood

Opening the tournament

Wrestling in the 195-pound weight bracket, Wood (35-9) entered the state meet feeling as though a win in his first-round match against Springboro's Jacob Kowalski (42-2) would set him on a path to a top-eight finish and a place on the podium, but a loss would leave him with no room for error.

In the second period of the match, Wood got Kowalski on his back and pinned him – giving him his 30th pin of the season, one behind the program record he set last season – or so he thought.

While one official ruled it a pin, the other said it occurred out of bounds. After conferring, the pin was deemed out of bounds, and the match resumed. Only for Wood to end it moments later with another pin.

So, does he get credit for two pins and tie his record?

“That’s what I was thinking,” Wood said.

His second-round match, however, was no laughing matter. Wood ran up against the tournament favorite, Seth Schumate, a freshman phenom from Dublin Coffman. Schumate, the eventual champion, sent Wood into the consolation bracket with a technical fall.

“The first time I’ve ever been teched in my career,” Wood said. “It’s crazy. His technique and strength were just...I don’t even know.”

Despite the loss, Wood’s confidence remained high. Losing to the eventual state champion held no shame. Plus, his first opponent in the consolation bracket was a familiar face, Oregon Clay’s Ty Cobb, whom Wood had beaten the previous week in the district tournament and two weeks before that in the TRAC championship.

While a victory would ensure Wood a podium finish, disaster nearly struck.

“Going into the match, my ribs were hurting from wrestling Seth, and I didn’t know what it was, really,” Wood said. “During the (Cobb) match, I don’t remember exactly what I did, but it felt like my lungs collapsed.”

Unable to breathe, Wood took 90 seconds of injury time to try to catch his breath. When the match resumed, Cobb attacked Wood’s ribs further.

“I would have done the same thing,” Wood said. “You’re going to take advantage of the opportunities you’re given.”

With Wood hobbled, Cobb tied the match and sent it to overtime.

There, Wood received karmic retribution.

A year ago, Wood’s tournament run ended prematurely on a controversial disqualification ruling.

Friday night, with his hopes of a place on the podium clinging by a thread, Wood caught a break.

Cobb’s shoe came off during the match, a rule infraction which cost him a point and gave Wood the sudden victory, 12-11.

“I said, ‘I guess I was meant to win this one,’” Wood said.

Trying to wrestle on

With his place on the podium assured, the only unknown was in what place he’d stand. And if he could continue at all.

The trainers at the tournament said he likely had a rib cage dislocation. When his next match came the following morning, in the consolation semifinals, he wasn’t sure he’d be able to answer the bell.

“I went down there, and they put this big compression wrap on me under my singlet, and then I had to wrestle through it,” he said. “It’s senior year. I’m at the state. You might as well give it all you’ve got. That’s what I did.”

He wrestled Harrison’s Max Boyle, who had defeated Wood in a match by two points the previous year. Unable to maneuver well with his injury, Wood lost to Boyle 8-2.

That set Wood up for the final match of his career, in the seventh/eighth-place match against Delaware Hayes’ Jacob McClosky. Wood ignored the injury and took a convincing 8-2 victory to close his career with a win and a seventh-place finish.

“I went out, I felt I wrestled great,” he said. “My adrenaline was pumping so much, I couldn’t even feel my ribs. But I felt it afterwards.”

For Wood, who began wrestling when he was four years old, closing his career on the state meet podium was the end of a year-long journey.

“That was my senior goal. I wanted to try to lead the team to the best success we could, and then get myself to a place at state. I did that, and it’s crazy. And I’m glad I went out and got a win to end my career.

“I’d suggest for anybody to come out wrestle,” he said. “It’s made me a better person. Taught me responsibility and hard work. As I said, I’ve never quit anything in my life, and that’s from what coaches have taught the people I’ve been around due to that sport and me.”