

Crue Cooper
by Larry Pellet



Crue Cooper

With all the markings of a hometown hero, Fruitport High School Junior wrestler Crue Cooper seems to be taking his new-found notoriety all in stride. Recently crowned 4th in his 171 lb weight class at Ford Field after a grueling state championship tournament, the soft-spoken brother of 5 stated he “just wanted to make people at home proud.”

Not only has he accomplished that, but he also fulfilled a childhood fantasy of taking the Grand March (a parade march inside the stadium which he described as “crazy...it gave me chills”), and will have his picture permanently displayed on the walls of FHS as a monument of hard work, dedication, focus and perseverance that began 6 years ago when he first started wrestling. Oh, and he also managed to stress his grandmother out during the tournament, by winning two of his matches in overtime.

FHS wrestling coach Mike Michelli says Coop has improved by leaps and bounds. “He has a full tank of gas and a lot of drive...it’s hard to keep him off of the mat. He’ll punch you in the mouth and keep coming” (figuratively).



Coaches Mike Michelli and Ron Gaffner

The son of Eli and Tracy Cooper, and the middle brother to his siblings, Crue began his journey as a fifth grader, crediting his older brothers, and in particular Levi, as a motivating force to begin grappling. Working through junior high, he landed on the scene with a 17-15 record as a freshman, before deciding to dedicate himself to off-season matches and increased weight lifting. From there, his record improved to 40-11 as a sophomore, then finally to 41-5 as a junior, with only 1 loss during the regular season.

“I was running more,” he stated, “and doing more pushups. They would bring in special coaches, my older brother, and wrestlers from Muskegon Community College to wrestle me. It was tough cutting out certain foods from my diet, but it was all worth it in the end. I wouldn’t change a thing.” A smile crept up on his face when asked if he could beat some of his coaches. “Once in a while,” he said.

Citing fishing and hunting as some of his hobbies, the Fruitport native says he enjoys the small-town feel of the village, like “walking to Burger Crest and knowing people there.”

Legendary Muskegon Community College coach Ron Gaffner also sings his praises. “What Crue lacks in experience, he makes up with a solid body and good range,” he stated.

Planning to cut back a little this off season - but not much - Cooper says he will participate in wrestling matches with Myway, a Michigan youth based wrestling organization, and NuWay, America’s premier wrestling association. Formally a high school quarterback (last season, playing H Back, Slot Receiver, and Defensive End), he states he will forgo his senior season and focus on working with his grandpa Jim, and of course, wrestling. His goals are to perfect his style by working on his technique, seeking out tougher matches, and to “make it” to the championship match.

A victory there seems beyond the wildest dream for the humble athlete, but with older competition out of the way, good-spirited Crue is perched with the right laser-like mindset and work ethic to stand alone at the top of the mountain. Describing his trophy case as “decent”, the up-and-comer would prefer to see his name higher up on the wrestling brackets.

Beyond the formative years of high school looms college, perhaps MCC with it’s great wrestling program, and even some potential for national fame.

Quite fitting for a guy who will do whatever it takes to make his hometown proud.

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