

Robbie Sagaris of LIU Wins in Largest Upset in School History

By Austin Sommer, EIWA Sports Information Director



Robbie Sagaris has been the 125lbs starter for the LIU Sharks since he stepped onto campus. Now, a leader of the team, his hard work has been shining through only the two weeks into his senior year campaign. Over the weekend, he earned a huge win over 7th ranked Dean Peterson of Rutgers to kick off the dual. This win cements him into the record books with the largest upset in the school's short Division 1 wrestling history.

There was just something in the air leading up to the match on Sunday. Head Coach, John Arceri, was texting Robbie on Friday with words of encouragement like "I feel it." With Robbie responding, "It's going to be a good weekend." Although the goal was not clearly stated, they were on

the same page.

Robbie earned a 7th place finish at EIWAs a season ago, where the top 6 place finishers were granted trips to NCAAs. This has only increased his determination to outwork his opponents. Any wrestler who has failed on achieving a goal can attest to how much it stings. This is the best motivation for anyone. During the offseason, his work ethic changed. Coach Arceri mentioned Robbie has been "Training with more pop. His hand fighting is harder and he's really trying to dominate practice partners to widen the gap."

Because of Robbie's approach to the season, he carries a responsibility on his shoulders to get the team started on a high note. Being a leader of the team and usually being the first on the mat, he was born to be in this role. "He loves to be the spark plug of the team" Coach Arceri stated. Then, he said with a laugh, "Robbie is not the most physically intimidating looking guy, but his hand fight and toughness is next level. He's done a great job at getting the ball rolling for the guys behind him." Sagaris, an Ohio native, is a leader on and off the mat too. He was an NWCA All-American last season while majoring in Economics.

Sagaris is not one to shy away from tough competition. He's known for gravitating towards bigger partners in the room, including Coach Arceri – who competed at 149lbs during his college days. Robbie gets excited for matches when he's the underdog on paper. To start the season, he had a match with the returning NCAA Champ, Richie Figueroa of Arizona State. I saw Robbie before the match with a smile on his face. He said hi to me, then said "I'm ready to take on the champ. I need to see where I'm at." He went out and lost 6-1 – not a bad showing by any means. Many wrestlers can attest to that fact that taking on the top-ranked guy is not exactly exciting.

Robbie's "good weekend" was cut short when his upset was quickly overshadowed by a loss to Princeton's Ethan Rivera, a match Sagaris would love to have back. Coach Arceri's comments on that loss were that he maybe "lost focus, or his Zen – whatever you want to call it." The emotional high of a monumental win can make it hard to turn around a short time later and refocus on the next dual at hand. "This will help Robbie in the long run. It will help him develop a short memory and refocus after an emotional roller coaster." Coach Arceri explained it perfectly.

Robbie, along with his LIU teammates, experienced that roller coaster of emotions all within a few hours. The sport of wrestling is a mentally taxing sport. The best wrestlers show they are the ones who remain even-keel, avoiding the highs and the lows, during competition. The craziness of the sport is being on top of the world one minute, just to see yourself sink into a low point. The positive aspect of this – it's still November. This is all a learning experience for Robbie Sagaris. Having a great win on his resume, will do him favors in March. But the learning experience of refocusing after a big win (or unfortunate loss) will be the more valuable resume-builder.