

## DAILY MESSENGER

By Dan Glickman  
 Messenger Post Freelancer

[Print Page](#)

February 11, 2016 2:49PM

## Raes brothers keep wrestling tradition alive

Will and Hammond are top-notch grapplers at Midlakes, just like dad was in the 1980s.

He's a bit biased, of course, but Steve Howcroft loves wrestling.

"There's something about wrestling as a sport itself," says the coach who has guided Midlakes to the last three Finger Lakes East titles. "It's a tough sport.

"It takes something special, a special type of kid."

And yet, that type of kid has emerged twice this generation from the Raes family: and Will (a senior) and Hammond (a junior).

Will recently finished third at 138 pounds at the 2016 Wayne-Finger Lakes championships and fourth at the Section V Class BBB championships last weekend after winning the 126-pound title last season.

Hammond, meanwhile, was class champion back in 2013 and came in first at 160 pounds at the 2016 Wayne-Finger Lakes championship in 2015. Last weekend, he won the BBB title at 160 pounds and enters this weekend's Division II SuperSectionals as the No. 1 seed at 160 pounds.

And they aren't the first in their family to find wrestling success. Their father, Ron, was a top wrestler for Midlakes in the late 1980s and they not only have a handful of uncles and other relatives involved with the program, the farm they live and work on is a sponsor of the team.

So perhaps the family's prowess on the mat is genetic. Perhaps it comes from the fact that they have a work ethic built from growing up on a farm.

Or maybe, it's just experience.

"They are two guys who have come through and have been wrestling their whole lives," says Howcroft.

Neither quite remember how they started wrestling.

"We just kind of started it," says Hammond.

But Ron certainly remembers.

"I wanted them to wrestle," he says. "When they were 5 years old, they called us. I said, 'Sure, let's try it.'"

As much as Ron remembers the beginning, he also remembers the not-so-smooth start.

"I wasn't even sure they were going to figure out," he says. "You know, when they are five and six they are just rolling around."

Over time, though, they've obviously "figured it out." They each got to varsity when they reached seventh grade, and by 2012-13 they were facing each other in the finals of the 99-pound division of the Section V Class BBB finals. It was an experience that both Hammond and Will agreed was ery weird, despite the fact they had already practiced against each other for years.

Hammond won that matchup, and the two have both gotten better since while also moving up to higher weight classes. They've also continued on a tough training regime: lifting weights on Monday, Wednesdays and Fridays, running, and, of course, farmwork such as chopping wood.

"When they're not wrestling, they're farming," says Ron.

"We do some stuff outside, we go to practice," says Hammond. "And we wrestle at another teammate's (Wyatt Smith) house."

"He has a wrestling barn," says Will. "With a big mat nearly all over, we wrestle (there) every Saturday night."

And even then, they don't necessarily stop when school stops, as they also train and wrestle at Superior Wrestling at Palmyra-Macedon.

Despite all of this training, there's no guarantee they will continue wrestling after high school. Will doesn't think he'll wrestle in college, while Hammond says it will depend on scholarships.

But until then, the two Raes boys will keep chopping wood, lifting weights and going to the "wrestling barn," something that makes them those special types of kids that their coach talks about.

"They are two guys who have come through and have been wrestling their whole lives," says Howcroft. "They can handle all of it and make the best of their opportunities (by) working hard."



Brothers Hammond and Will Raes of Midlakes followed in the wrestling footsteps of their father, Ron, who was a Finger Lakes West champion in 1988. Hammond is a Section V champion at 160 pounds and Will finished fourth at 138 pounds. Jack Haley/Messenger Post Media

---

<http://www.mpnnow.com/article/20160211/SPORTS/160219849>

Print Page