



Press Release

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Montebello High CIF Wrestling Champion Wins First Back-to-Back Titles

Nico Gomez, Coached by Father, Continues Family Tradition of MHS Wrestling Success

MONTEBELLO – Competitive wrestling is a father-son tradition in the Gomez family. Now, thanks to son Nicholas “Nico” Gomez, it has turned into a winning tradition for Montebello High School. In February, Nico became Montebello’s first-ever two-time Southern Section California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) 106 lb. Division wrestling champion, clinching the title under the watchful and supportive eye of his father, Pete Gomez, who attended Montebello High School (MHS) and now serves as MHS assistant wrestling coach.

“There is no better example of Montebello school pride than a son following in his father’s footsteps, with both personifying dedication, hard work and purpose,” Montebello Unified Board President Edgar Cisneros said. “Congratulations to Nico, his coaches and team – and as an Oiler alum myself, I can say with conviction that they have inspired us all and instilled pride in our District.”

Nico claimed his first championship in 2014 as a junior. This year, he helped Montebello earn a share of the Almont League title for the first time in 17 years.

“It’s a dream come true,” Nico said. “I give credit to the Montebello coaching staff, my teammates, principal Jeff Schwarz and athletic director Ralph Gutierrez. They gave me opportunities and made sure I never fell behind in my training.”

Pete Gomez wrestled at Montebello High from 1984 to 1988 and, after college, returned to Montebello as assistant coach for five years until stepping down when Nico was born. Nico, like his father, grew up to be a super-competitive athlete who, though he started wrestling in sixth grade, was a star football player at heart.

“His passion was always football,” the elder Gomez said. “But at 92 pounds he didn’t play much. Finally, in the ninth grade, he fully committed to wrestling.”

When Nico joined the Montebello High wrestling team, Pete returned to his alma mater as assistant under newly arrived head coach Robert Ferra. In four short years, the two have helped turn Montebello into a Southern Section contender.

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For Nico, success on the mat was slow in coming. He won some, he lost some. At the end of his sophomore year, he was eliminated on the first day of the CIF tournament. The loss didn't sit well with him.

"Losing was an ugly feeling," Nico said. "I put it in my head that nothing was going to stop me from being the best."

Nico made the decision to train year round and instituted a rigorous workout regimen that required him to sacrifice a good deal of his social life, raising some eyebrows among his friends. Undeterred, Nico never let up, winning one match after another, becoming the team's star wrestler.

Beyond individual accolades, Nico's motivation to succeed had a more personal element. His grandfather, Pete Gomez Sr., was Nico's biggest fan and supporter, going to all the practices and matches. When his grandfather passed away shortly before junior year, Nico dedicated the 2014 season to him.

This year, Nico's dedication paid off and he found himself at the CIF championships, where he won the title on February 21 – his grandfather's birthday.

"No matter how tired I was, thinking of him inspired me," Nico said. "It was a way to spread the family name. Every time I am on the wrestling mat, I think of my grandfather."

He also qualified and participated in the State Championships in Bakersfield earlier this month.

The MUSD Board and District administrators will honor Nico for his athletic achievements at the April 2 Board meeting held at the District Office.

"Nico truly represents an inspiring work ethic – not only on behalf of his family, but as a Montebello High student," Superintendent of Education Susanna Contreras Smith said. "We could not be more proud of Nico, his family and his team for reminding us of the depth of our Montebello traditions and families."

Photo Caption

MHS-Gomez: In February, Nicholas "Nico" Gomez became Montebello's first-ever two-time Southern Section California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) 106 lb. Division wrestling champion, clinching the title under the watchful and supportive eye of his father, Pete Gomez (right), who attended Montebello High School (MHS) and now serves as MHS assistant wrestling coach.

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Montebello Unified School District is a dynamic learning institution employing top-quality educators. It is the combined work of many that allows the District to continue educating more than 30,000 students every year using the 40 Developmental Assets at all of our school sites. It is through everyone's efforts – students, parents, teachers, staff and administrators – that we are achieving the District's number one goal of raising student achievement. Learn more online at www.montebello.k12.ca.us.