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By Rob Sherrill, W.I.N. High School Editor

There's something unique about every wrestling program in America. And there's no doubt about what Brandon (Fla.) High hangs its wrestling headgear on: "The Streak."

It's Brandon's national-record streak of dual-meet victories that now spans an incredible 31 years — longer than the lifespans of the past decade of Brandon wrestlers — and over 400 wins. The Eagles, ranked No. 13 nationally in this issue of W.I.N., are heavy favorites to take their Class 2A state title once again.

Coach Russ Cozart didn't start "The Streak," but his tireless work ethic helped extend it, while elevating Brandon's program to national prominence. This year, they added a fourth-place finish in the Beast of the East Tournament at Newark, Del.

The past four years, part of Cozart has been on the mat at Brandon, literally. His son Rocky is expected to close his high school career by winning his third state title at 160 pounds this month.

Rocky first stepped out of his father's shadow for good three years ago, when he launched a tremendous air show in winning the Cadet National Greco-Roman title and finished second in freestyle. He repeated those finishes at Fargo last summer in the Junior Nationals.

Rocky, who signed with Michigan State, has lived with it every day of his life and, as he reveals in this interview, has survived to tell about it.

WIN: You've grown up in a unique situation, having been around wrestling since your earliest memories of anything in life. To be around it as much as you are and to be as successful as you've been, you really have to love it, don't you?

Cozart: Yeah, you definitely have to have a love for the sport and I think I've got that. Otherwise, you're not gonna make it through.

WIN: Your father has coached you your entire life. I know you could say a million things about the influence he's had on you. What can you say about him that maybe people don't know?

Cozart: No matter how hard he tries to be serious and to push you, he's still a really good guy. He gives me a lot of advice and things to do, but he's pretty easygoing. He's a great coach and a great father at the same time.

WIN: What are your earliest memories of wrestling?

Cozart: I can remember when I was really little, maybe five, six years old, just wrestling around and stuff.

WIN: Your father is a freestyle guy (four-time Masters world champion), but you've developed into one of the great lift-and-throwers of recent years. How did you get to be so good at that particular style and that particular technique?

Cozart: I just think it's a matter of doing it constantly, just doing the same thing over and over again. If you do something that long, you just get to be good at it, and I think that's what happened. You just pick up something and then you keep learning more about it, and I guess I picked up that technique a little more easily and a little better than the other ones.

WIN: Your father is kind of a wiry guy, with that wiry strength. You're kind of stocky — a different build completely. Where did those genes come from?

Cozart: You know, I'm not sure. My dad was really small when he was in high school. He never got above 112 or 119 pounds. He once thought I might be a little small, but I guess it didn't turn out that way.

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WIN: When you get into a tight match, or maybe you get behind, it has to help knowing you've got that move in your hip pocket that you can throw at somebody.

Cozart: It's definitely a good thing to have. You can be losing a match by a little bit, and then suddenly winning it by a lot. It's just a good weapon to have, a good tool to work with.

WIN: The proficiency you've developed with that move and the success you've had with it have definitely gotten you a lot of attention. I know it got my attention your freshman year at Fargo, and I think you became a household name with a lot of people, with the success you had with it there.

Cozart: Yeah, people in the crowd want to see exciting things happen on the mat, and my style of wrestling is more exciting than other people's, I guess you could say. But I guess the crowd likes it, and if the crowd likes it, you're going to be able to put on a good show for them.

WIN: "The Streak" is something the rest of the country reads about and hears about once in a while, and to us it just seems like folklore. What's it like to live "The Streak" every day?

Cozart: I think about what (prior Brandon wrestlers) did before us. You have to live up to what people in the past have already done for Brandon. We're proud to be a part of it, and I think everybody that's a part of it is very proud to be a part of Brandon wrestling and a part of "The Streak." I think we have to represent that the best we can.

WIN: You are one of the most popular people on those message boards all over the country. How did that get started?

Cozart (laughs): I don't really have any clue how that got started. But I like to read them and see what they're saying. It doesn't bother me at all. The guys on the team joke about it a lot, because they say I like it and I feed off of it and stuff. But I really just think it's kind of funny. Stuff like that really doesn't bother me much.

WIN: It's a sort of backhanded way of giving you respect, isn't it?

Cozart: Yeah, I think so. It's just really funny what people do and what people say, and how popular all that stuff becomes. It's kind of an honor to me to be talked about like that. You just can't let it get in the way of what you're trying to do.

WIN: I guess it's really an honor when you're able to back it up.

Cozart: You just go out and do your thing, and give it your best, and let people talk about what they want to talk about.

WIN: What's the funniest thing you've read about yourself on a message board?

Cozart: Some of the things that people write are a little more of an exaggeration. I've read some things that are blown way, way out of proportion. They were nothing like that.

WIN: If there were one thing you'd like the country to know about Florida wrestling, what would that be?

Cozart: I think the rest of the country underestimates Florida a lot. We don't have just one or two good wrestlers or one good team. We've got a lot of them and we try to bring it all the time.