FROM MY SIDE OF THE FENCE

By Jeff Meyer, Pelican Rapids Press Publisher

Family is what I felt this weekend, even though I'm not from Minneota.
When I arrived at the NYWA youth wrestling tournament I was greeted by Tim DeVlaeminck and Jeff Buysse. We talked for quite a while about wrestling, about Minneota, and about the paper.
I couldn't have been more proud. They talked about my step dad, Byron Higgin, and what a perfect fit he was for Minneota. I told them he was like a kid in a candy store. He loves every minute of it.
A few dads, "I'm thinking," asked Byron if he was going to head to Rochester to cover the state youth wrestling tournament. As much as he would have loved to, and I know he wanted too, he couldn't.

That's where he called on me. My son wrestles too, and made it to state in Rochester.
"Can you take some photos for me," he asked? Not a problem at all.
I've really never paid attention to Minneota wrestlers, except when my son wrestles them. However, this year was different. I watched the boys compete on the mat individually and as a team. They were very composed, win or lose. I respected that so much.
Since my son has never had a team at the state tournament, this was a new experience for me. As my wife and son went back to the hotel, I stuck around to take a few pictures of the team tournament. After all I told my pa I would.
What I observed was simply amazing to me.
Each wrestler was given an ensuring look from his coach, not to mention a hand shake. These little guys weren't acting like elementary kids, they were acting like what I saw at the varsity state tournament — as "Young Men", as a class act. No matter the outcome, win or lose, they would run to the coaches, who were obviously very proud.
Minneota, you have good reason to be proud.
I felt an instant family bond with the wrestling dads. We had a few things in common — wrestling and Minneota.
Your coaches would walk by and ask how my son was doing. I respected that so much. I almost asked one of them to help coach my son. I knew he would have, but he was coaching a different Viking.
We are from Pelican Rapids also known as the Vikings.
As I took pictures of your kids, I felt like they were from my team, hoping they would get that takedown or those back points.
We've been around wrestling for a long time. I've seen teams that were composed only of

individuals. Then I see a team like Minneota, which is about the kids, and the program. It's no wonder you guys are a wrestling powerhouse. It starts at a young age as you build character through the varsity level.

I watched the varsity, I took pictures of you guys at the state tournament. I felt the family bond back then.

You have an amazing thing going on in Minneota. Keep it going. Because your class act shows.

My only hope is, if my son makes it to the state tournament some day, he doesn't have to face a Viking from the other side of the state.

Keep it going Minneota, you represent the sport well.

The community should be proud of their young athletes.