

# Wrestling: Martinez departs Thursday for Iowa's Waldorf University

By Todd Forrest  
Sports Editor  
sports@nganews.com

The proverb "all things come to those that wait" perfectly describes the wrestling career of recent Union County graduate Cristian Martinez.

With his college plans still up in the air as recently as a month ago, Martinez never lost faith. Finally, in early July he got the news he was hoping for when Waldorf University in Forest City, Iowa made an offer he couldn't refuse.

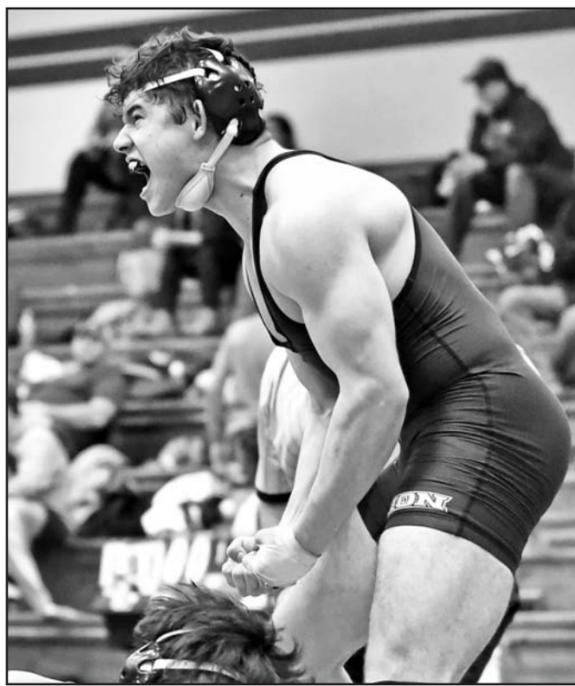
"They sent a letter to let me know they wanted me to wrestle for them," Martinez said during an interview last week. "So I've only been committed for about a month."

Patience has been a virtue for Martinez ever since he hit the mat five years ago.

While other kids began grappling at a younger age, Martinez wasn't drawn to the sport until eighth grade. And after three years of cutting his teeth, things finally started to click.

As a junior, the 182-pounder had an epiphany - realizing he'd found his calling and that it could potentially be his ticket to higher education.

"I definitely remember when that happened," Martinez said. "It was during my junior year and I had a lot of influence from my coaches. They believed in me and told me that I need to keep this up and make (wrestling) a priority because I was good enough to take it to



L-R: Union County's Cristian Martinez as a junior during the 2018-19 season and as a senior at last December's Senior Night. Photos/Todd Forrest

the next level."

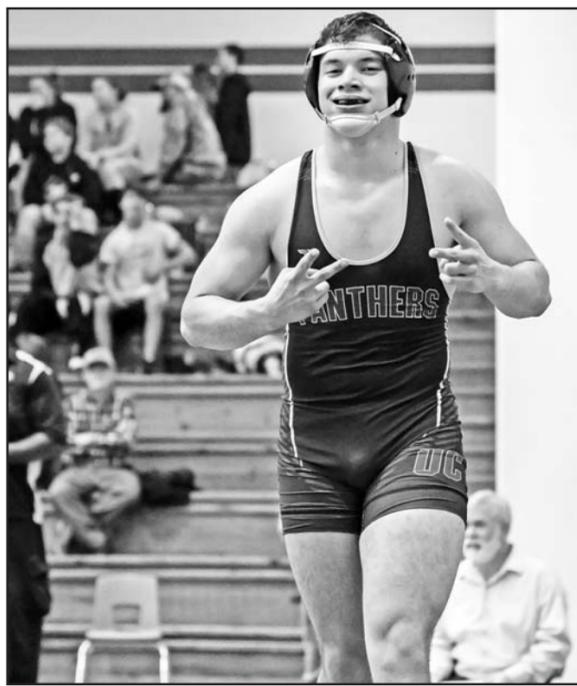
According to Union County wrestling coach Justin Byers, he looks back at Martinez's 11th grade year as when he turned the corner.

"We had high expectations for him during his junior year," he said. "But we always knew he had potential because of his impeccable work ethic. He would get up and run 4-5 miles everyday. He was always in the weight room and anytime we rolled out the mats he was constantly there working. Not only does he have what it takes

physically to be a college wrestler, but he has the work ethic that you need at that level."

Coach Byers was also quick to acknowledge that his physicality and a nose-to-the-grindstone approach aren't the only qualities Martinez brings to the mat.

"He's a very methodical competitor," Byers added. "It often seemed like he was playing a chess match with his opponents. He was always aware of the points and the clock, especially if he was ahead. I believe that is what really separates him



L-R: Union County's Cristian Martinez as a junior during the 2018-19 season and as a senior at last December's Senior Night. Photos/Todd Forrest

and puts him among the upper-echelon of wrestlers."

During his senior year, Martinez suffered an upset loss during the State Sectionals to a wrestler he had defeated earlier in the season. But how he responded to the setback confirmed Byers' faith in Martinez and his readiness for the next level.

"It was a heartbreaking defeat and I was worried," Byers said. "But he bounced back and that's very important as a college wrestler. He might not be a vocal, rah-rah type of guy

but he's a leader and one of the best young men that I've ever had the pleasure of coaching. I know he's going to go on and do great things."

Martinez also had plenty of praise for his coaches, who help mold him from an inexperienced eighth grader into a college athlete.

"Coach Byers and Coach (Michael) Smith-Foot taught me pretty much everything I know," he said. "They were right there with me on my journey and helped me become a better wrestler. All of the credit goes

to them.

"I also want to thank my family, my friends and my teammates. They helped make this decision a lot easier with all of their support and encouragement."

Before getting contacted by Waldorf, the only school Martinez considered was Benedictine College in Kansas.

"I was planning on going to Benedictine for the spring semester but everything worked out and Waldorf was just a better opportunity."

Martinez is scheduled to leave for Iowa on Thursday. And despite not having much time to contemplate his decision, he immediately bonded with the head coach, Murie Tomke, which helped expedite his college decision.

"I've frequently been in contact with the coach and he's just an all-around amazing guy," Martinez said. "He's helped me out with everything, answered all my questions and is just an awesome guy."

One drawback to the late offer was the inability to visit the campus. However, Martinez has seen pictures and was immediately drawn to Waldorf's small campus.

"I don't mind that at all," he said. "I actually prefer a smaller learning environment. It's also just a beautiful campus right in the middle of town."

*The North Georgia News would like to congratulate Cristian and wish him all the best in the future.*

## Union County Softball Stats

#	Roster	GP	PA	AB	H	1B	2B	3B	HR	RBI	R	HBP	ROE	FC	CI	BB	SO	AVG	OBP	SLG	OPS
1	Sierra Burnette	2	4	4	3	2	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	.750	.750	1.000	1.750
17	Ansel Collins	3	10	10	5	5	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	.500	.500	.500	1.000
4	Lexi Sisum	3	12	10	5	1	3	1	0	6	4	0	1	0	0	2	1	.500	.583	1.000	1.583
6	Hannah Patton	3	12	8	3	1	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	4	1	.375	.583	.825	1.208
5	Emma Roxbury	3	12	9	3	1	2	0	0	5	3	0	0	1	0	2	2	.333	.455	.556	1.010
11	Chloe Potts	3	12	10	3	3	0	0	0	2	4	0	1	0	0	2	1	.300	.417	.300	.717
13	Trinity Queen	3	12	12	3	2	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	.250	.250	.333	.583
2	Caley Davis	3	7	6	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	.167	.167	.167	.333
8	Aubrie Banton	3	12	9	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	1	.111	.273	.111	.384
19	Caroline Karnes	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	.000	.000	.000	.000
3	Emily Byers	2	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	.000	.000	.000	.000
15	Jewell Massey	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	.000	.000	.000	.000
16	Kaelyn Jones	3	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	.000	.000	.000	.000
23	Katie Byers	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	.000	.000	.000	.000
10	Rebekah Chambers	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	.000	1.000	.000	1.000
9	Tori Tracy	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	.000	.000	.000	.000
Totals		3	101	85	27	17	9	1	0	19	25	0	4	3	0	13	10	.318	.408	.447	.855

#	Roster	IP	GP	GS	W	L	SV	SVO	BS	SV%	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HBP	ERA	WHIP
13	Trinity Queen	14.0	2	2	2	0	0	0	0	.000	12	4	2	3	11	3	1.000	1.071
1	Sierra Burnette	6.2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	.000	6	3	2	2	4	0	2.100	1.200
12	Adaley Burnette	0.1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	.000	2	6	6	4	0	0	126.000	18.000
Totals		21.0	3	3	2	1	0	0	0	.000	20	13	10	9	15	3	3.333	1.381

## Georgia High School Association Football update

By Todd Forrest  
Sports Editor  
sports@nganews.com

**Thomaston** - A week after canceling all high school football scrimmage games, the Georgia High School Association (GHSA) elected to keep Sept. 4 as the tentative start to the 2020 season.

Last month, the GHSA Board of Trustees voted unanimously to delay the season by two weeks (Sept. 4). However, the GHSA acknowledged last week that the start date could once again be pushed back "based on COVID-19 data."

For additional information, visit [www.ghsa.net](http://www.ghsa.net). The site is usually updated on Wednesday with the board's latest statements and/or guidelines.



## Upward 2020 Flag Football and Cheer registration

House of Prayer Church is glad to announce that it is once again time for our Upward Flag Football and Cheerleading 2020 season. Online registration is now open for boys and girls in grades kindergarten through 8th at [www.hopb.org](http://www.hopb.org).

The registration is accessible through August 22nd, and the price to participate is \$60. Payment plans are available, if needed. Convenient weekly practices commence the week of August 10th, while six games will be played Saturdays between August 22nd and September 26th.

Registrants should attend the evaluation that will be held on Saturday, August 1st on a drop-in basis between the hours

of 9:00 a.m. and 12:00 noon on the upper football field by the House of Prayer Family Life Center offices. For more information regarding registration, call the HOP church office at (706) 745-5925, or visit its Facebook page at Upward HOP-Blairsville.

About Upward Sports  
Founded in 1995 out of a church in Spartanburg, South Carolina, founder Caz McCaslin had a passion for sports and a deep desire to reach his community. He created a sports experience that met the unmet needs of children and their families, focused on the sports experience and sharing the love of Jesus Christ. This vision for one community quickly grew

into a team of individuals committed to supporting churches everywhere to maximize their unique resources and personalities to serve and meet the needs of their communities.

Today, there are over 2,800 Upward sports experiences across the U.S. serving hundreds of thousands of young athletes playing basketball, soccer, cheerleading and flag football. What began as a local, recreational basketball league focused on reaching the surrounding community with the message of Jesus Christ has grown into a nationwide movement helping churches use sports to engage their local communities with the gospel.

## NASCAR 2020

By Gerald Hodges/the Racing Reporter

### Elliott Gets Daytona Road Course Win

DAYTONA BEACH, FL - Chase Elliott held off Denny Hamlin for his third road course win in a row. It was his eighth career Cup Series victory and the second of this season. He led 3 times for 34 of the 65 lap Inaugural Daytona Road Course, and crossed the finish line .202-seconds in front of Hamlin.

Elliott, who also won Stage 1, had a lead of 9 or more seconds for much of the final 18 laps. A late race caution caused by Kyle Busch set up the three lap shootout.

"I don't think I did anything special today," Elliott said. "I had a phenomenal car. I have to thank my crew and all the fans. Really fortunate from that standpoint. Had a good week of preparation and came out and really executed on the race."

"Any win at Daytona is special. (Crew chief) Alan (Gustafson) and I were joking that we had to change it to a road course to win at Daytona. ... Just a great day."

While the finish might have looked close, Hamlin never reached a point where he could attempt a pass on Elliott in the last three laps.

"I kept him honest there," Hamlin said. "He had such good drive off the corners, I couldn't do anything with him."

Martin Truex Jr. finished third, while Jimmie Johnson was fourth and Chris Buescher fifth. Clint Bowyer, Kaz Grala, William Byron, Joey Logano, and Michael McDowell rounded out the top 10.

Austin Dillon had tested positive for the coronavirus and was replaced in the No. 3 Richard Childress Chevrolet by Kaz Grala, who finished seventh.

Points leader and polesitter Kevin Harvick had two spin outs. The first one came during lap 37 and several other cars were involved. The second one was on lap 44. He lost one lap, but was able to get a 17th place finish.

Kyle Busch had a rough day. A brake issue sent his No. 18 Joe Gibbs Racing Toyota behind the wall for lengthy repairs on lap 2. He then spun in Turn 6, and the brief off-course excursion knocked him back to 13th on Lap 25. When his brakes gave out with 17 laps to go, Busch steered the No. 18 to the Cup Series garage, where he lost six laps to the front-runners while his crew worked. He returned to the track, but both rear tires blew out with six laps remaining. He finished 37th, his fifth finish outside the top 30 this year.

Top 10 points leaders: 1. Harvick-939, 2. Hamlin-821, 3. Keselowski-803, 4. Elliott-775, 5. Blaney-755, 6. Logano-754, 7. Truex-753, 8. Almirola-682, 9. Kurt Busch-673, 10. Kyle Busch-652.

### CINDRIC IS HOT IN XFINITY SERIES

Austin Cindric led 21 of the 52 laps in Saturday's Xfinity Series race. He was 7.108 seconds ahead of runner-up Brandon Jones at the checkered flag. It marked his fifth win in the last six series races, and tied a mark set by Sam Ard in 1983.

Cindric led the first 15 laps from the pole position to take Stage 1. Chase Briscoe won Stage 2 by holding off Cindric in a heated final-lap battle. Cindric didn't like the way Briscoe blocked him and tossed a water bottle at Briscoe's car during the stage intermission.

Noah Gragson was third, followed by AJ Allmendinger, Andy Lally, Jeremy Clements, Riley Herbst, Harrison Burton, Justin Allgaier, and Myatt Snider.

Top 10 points leaders: 1.



Elliott Gets Daytona Road Course Win

Cindric-830, 2. Briscoe-782, 3. Gragson-740, 4. Chastain-709, 5. H. Burton-645, 6. Haley-637, 7. Allgaier-633, 8. Annett-567, 9.B. Jones-561, 10. Herbst-462.

Here are the results of Sunday's Truck Series race at Daytona: 1. Sheldon Creed, 2. Brett Moffitt, 3. Raphael Lessard, 4. Matt Crafton, 5. Austin Hill, 6. Tyler Ankrum, 7. Grant Enfinger, 8. Parker Kligerman, 9. Scott Lagasse Jr. 10. Stewart Friesen.

Top 10 points leaders: 1. Hill-476, 2. Moffitt-422, 3. Smith-417, 4. Rhodes-413, 5. Eckes-412, 6. Creed-399, 7. Crafton-375, 8. Enfinger-366, 9. Ankrum-343, 10. Gilliland-340.

### MCDOWELL IMPROVING HIS PERFORMANCE

Michael McDowell, driver of the No. 34 Front Row Motorsports Ford has shown a lot of improvement over the month of July.

"It's one thing to run up front, then kinda fall off the map again, and be kinda stuck in the mid-20s," said McDowell. "But I just feel like now we're consistently in the teens every race. So, it means a lot to me to see the whole program be elevated to the point where we're not just racing the cars that we typically race every weekend - we're racing the big teams and the big dollars. We're doing it consistently."

"I think the consistency part of it is so rewarding. It's not like we've made it, we don't feel like that, but when you're doing it every week, you start to feel like you belong and we can do this. And not every week is gonna be like that - we know that. But at the same time, consistently running well, being competitive, and being in contention for top 10s, and getting top 15s is a huge achievement for our team and our program."

"Drew Blickensderfer, my crew chief, is a huge asset to the program. Because he's been on race winning teams and in contention for championships, that's what's cool about having him. He's a good balance of being excited that we're getting the finishes and feeling good about it, but also being like, "Hey, We belong here doing this and we need to keep going. We need to be able to move from 15th to 10th, 10th to 5th, and start challenging for wins." So, he does a good job of keeping the, "Alright, we're here, but let's keep going! We've got more to go!" So it's good to have that perspective."

While NASCAR forbids teams from doing any actual testing, they can still practice on simulated programs.

In preparation for the Daytona event, Stewart-Haas Racing (SHR) driver, Cole Custer spent multiple hours in the Ford simula-

tor.

"I've probably been in the simulator five or six hours practicing the Daytona road course," Custer said. "We've obviously had to sort through some stuff to get it as realistic as we think we can. From there, it's trying to get me better and there's a lot of stuff to work through because we haven't been there in these Cup cars. We're trying to make sure we are close on the car, and making sure I'm driving it how I need to. There's a lot of stuff to be done since we are going to a brand new track layout and we need to make sure we've hit everything so we are 100 percent when we show up."

There are three races left in the regular season before the playoffs start Sept. 6 at Darlington (S.C.) Raceway, and Custer's win at Kentucky earned him one of the coveted 16 playoff spots.

His teammate Kevin Harvick also owns a playoff spot after six wins this season.

**Racing Joke:** Alex was attending a cocktail party when a young lady came up to him. She introduced herself, then remarked, "You know... you look like my third husband."

"How many times have you been married?" asked Alex.

"Twice," replied the lady.

**Weekend Racing:** There will be five events this weekend at the Dover Monster Mile. Unfortunately, fans will not be allowed to attend.

The postponed Indy 500 race will be held Sun., Aug. 23. Coverage begins on NBC at 1 PM ET, with the green flag at 2:30 pm. Like the Dover NASCAR race, the grandstands will be empty.

Fri., Aug. 21; Truck Series race; Starting time: 5 PM ET; TV: FoxSports1.

Sat., Aug. 22; Xfinity Series race; Starting time: 12:30 PM ET; TV: NBCSN.

Sat., Aug. 22; Cup Series race; Starting time: 4 PM ET; TV: NBCSN.

Sun., Aug. 23; Xfinity Series race; Starting time: 1:30 PM ET; TV: NBCSN.

Sun., Aug. 23; Cup Series race; Starting time: 4 PM ET; TV: NBCSN.

**Racing Trivia Question:** Which Cup Series team does Martin Truex Jr. drive for?

**Last Week's Question:** How many NASCAR championships did Lee Petty win? Answer: He won the 1954, '58 and '59 titles.

Gerald Hodges is a syndicated NASCAR writer and author. His books may be viewed and ordered online at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com). You may contact him by e-mail at: [hodges@race500.com](mailto:hodges@race500.com).