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By EARL WATT

• Leader & Times

When Boomer and Zach squared off in an exhibition match Thursday, most would have been wrong if they were asked to guess the outcome.

Liberal's Zach Ward was a senior who had his share of success over the years.

Ulysses' Boomer Seabolt was also a senior, and he had never won a match.

Boomer tried hard every time, but he just never could get a win.

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& GOAL**



EARL WATT

Boomer is a special needs student, but that didn't keep him from participating as a Tiger.

"Boomer has a rough time," Ulysses coach Joe Gonzales said. "Obviously he is behind the other kids physically. But he tries. He is fun to have on the team. He keeps people's spirits up. He is just as much a part of the team as anyone else."

Zach saw Boomer wrestle at the Ulysses tournament last week, and Boomer was pinned quickly.

That didn't sit right with Zach.

"Boomer hasn't won any," Gonzales said. "The kids he has wrestled have been real good to him, they have been real receptive."

Despite the losses, Boomer would shake the hand of his opponent and opposing coach, and he would be back at practice to prepare for his next shot.

"He is definitely dedicated to being part of the team," Gonzales said. "You wish you could get that out of kids that don't have special needs."

When Zach squared off against Boomer, both wrestlers were very cautious, not wanting to make that early mistake that ends in a quick pin.

Boomer was able to earn a take-down, and Zach easily escaped.

The two tangled up again, and Boomer scored another take-down. This time Zach stayed on the mat, and Boomer had a chance to try to work on a move.

At one point, Boomer was able to get Zach in a cradle but couldn't get the pin before the first period ended.

Zach took the down position, and Boomer stepped in on top, but his hands were in the wrong locations. Zach showed Boomer how to put his hand on his elbow, and the official started the second round.

Boomer was able to get Zach on his back, and he had a pin.

For the first time in his wrestling career, Boomer's hand was raised, and Zach smiled and gave Boomer a hug, knowing how special it is to experience a win.

And Boomer took Zach by the hand and lifted his arm into the air.

Boomer then shook hands with every Redskin wrestler, and they each greeted him with a smile. And Boomer leapt into the air as he made his way back to his team, for the first time with a victory.

"Last night was his only win," Gonzales said. "I had nothing to do with it. Liberal's coach and kid had a discussion before we showed up."

Was it a gift? Perhaps.

But it was also a rare moment in sports when winning is redefined even if for one exhibition wrestling match, and both sides celebrated Boomer's only victory.

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