



Sports

JWP's Westphal, Maple River's Norgren to wrestle collegiately in own back yard



**JIM
RUEDA**
The Free Press

They sifted through the letters, handled the e-mails and phone calls, made their campus visits. In the end, Janesville-Waldorf-Pemberton's Jesse Westphal and Maple River's Aaron Norgren decided to stay home.

The two standout wrestlers have signed national letters of intent to attend Minnesota State

University next fall where they plan to continue their wrestling careers.

"It's kind of close to home and I like that a lot," Westphal said Wednesday. "I went to some meets (at MSU) last year and I liked the atmosphere. I've been to camps there, too, so I know (MSU head coach Jim) Makovsky a little bit."

Westphal, who wrestles from 135 to 140 pounds, finished second in the Class A state meet last year. He is ranked first in his weight class by The Guillotine newspaper heading into his senior high school season and has a career record of 122-29.

The four-time state qualifier says familiarity with some of the wrestlers already at MSU was a

factor in his decision.

"I know Tom Block and Cody Adams and Mike Davis and Brady Wilson. They had good things to say about the program so that helped me make my decision. I'm glad to have it behind me so now I can just go out and wrestle."

Please see RUEDA, Page D3

RUEDA: MSU coach excited about recruits

Continued from Page D1

Westphal said UW-La Crosse and St. Cloud State were also in the running before he made the decision to go to MSU. Makovsky likes the fact that Westphal is a lighter weight and anticipates the team will need help there over the next few years.

"I've seen Jesse wrestle a lot in high school and at our camps," Makovsky said. "He's had some big wins in his career; he's a pretty talented kid."

Norgren, a 189-pounder, is a three-time state tournament qualifier. He finished sixth at state last year and is ranked second by The Guillotine going into his final prep season.

He was a state freestyle champion and has a 138-35 career record in high school. Norgren finished third at USA Nationals in Waterloo, Iowa.

"MSU has a very good program and I just decided I wanted to be a part of it," Norgren said. "It's close to home and I'm sure it will be

a good fit for me. I know a few of the guys like Cody Adams and Michael Davis and Corey Harnitz so that should make things a little easier when I start out."

Norgren also visited Augsburg and Luther College but felt MSU presented the best opportunity. He is hoping to major in some aspect of criminal justice.

"Aaron has grown a lot the last couple of years," Makovsky said. "He's an upper weight and those aren't easy to find these days because a lot of the good ones also play football and decide to go that route."

Beyond their physical talents, Makovsky said he's excited to have both wrestlers join the Minnesota State program for two basic reasons: "They're local and they both love to wrestle. Those are two things you can't coach."

Jim Rueda is the Free Press sports editor. To contact him, call 344-6381 or e-mail him at jrueda@mankatofreepress.com.