

Alton Has Celebration For State Girls Wrestling Champion Antonia Phillips

by Christian Blaney
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ALTON - Antonia Phillips recently won the IHSA state girls wrestling championships title at 140 pounds in Illinois. Her historical achievement is being widely recognized by more than just the high school, who is proud to have her as a student. A well-attended celebration was held for Antonia on Friday afternoon at Alton High.

She is the first wrestler in the history of Alton High School to take home the title of state champion. After talking with those involved in her athletic accomplishments, it's

apparent that she can zero in on what she needs to improve at in every aspect of her life. During this event, there were multiple speakers including a few of Antonia's coaches, the Alton superintendent, the school principal, and the town's mayor.

Alton Mayor David Goins made a surprising announcement that Antonia's achievement will be displayed on signs all across the town. To be positioned at all road entrances, a sign will read "Welcome to Alton, Home of Antonia Phillips, 2022 IHSA Girls Wrestling STATE CHAMPION". The announcement of these signs was met with a very positive reaction during the gathering at Alton High School on March 4.

Antonia, along with a large portion of her family, is deaf; but this doesn't affect her ability to wrestle or learn new techniques. She works with her interpreter when coaches are giving instruction, and doesn't miss out on anything that a hearing person wouldn't.

In wrestling, coaches are allowed to shout tips and gameplans during a match, however, Antonia is independent of this process for the most part. If information needs to be communicated, then she can make visual contact with her interpreter, but it's obvious she knows what she needs to do when the timer's running. Her wrestling game is heavy on the fundamentals. She prefers the fireman's carry takedown and the double leg takedown as her go-to options from the neutral position. Her success at these techniques is apparent given her substantial wrestling victories, with a 20-3 season record.

Antonia's support structure played a large role in her success as an athlete. For the six years that she's been wrestling, her whole family has been on the same page in terms of her dedication to the sport. They will get her to any practice, any time it's happening.

Head Coach Eric Roberson noted that if he were to call a short notice practice at 8:30 p. m., she would be there. In addition, Roberson made a point that she is strong "not strong for a girl, she's just strong."

The mental and physical toughness that athletes must attain to rise to a high level in this sport is substantial, and Antonia has both of these qualities in surplus. As further evidence, she's not only a star on the mats, but she's an honor student in multiple classes and maintains good social relationships as well.

The Alton community, from the students to the mayor, is very proud of what Antonia Phillips has done this year. However, her work isn't finished. Next season will bring its trials, but she will have her background, training, and mental fortitude to support her when they arise.

After high school, she plans to continue wrestling and is looking at her potential destinations' academics before making any decisions. With a bulletproof mind, this

Alton representative will continue to be a role model to all people in the crucial department of work ethic.