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TRINITY - Bliss Joyce wasn't enthralled by any sports while growing up. Nothing really interested her. Not volleyball, not basketball, not soccer, not softball.

"I wasn't interested in any sport, but I was drawn to wrestling," the Trinity High School senior said. "I don't know, I guess it was a way to take your anger out."

While female wrestlers weren't common even four years ago, the sport was undergoing quite a change as more and more females made the transition to what used to be an all-male sport. Still, Joyce laced up her wrestling boots, put on her singlet and entered a sport dominated by boys.

"When she first started, girls wrestling was just starting to make a trend," said THS coach Brandon Coggins, who led the Bulldogs boys to a state championship last year. "She had to wrestle a lot of guys and she beat a lot of guys. She was really the pioneer of female wrestling at Trinity."

Just a freshman, Joyce, who now wrestles in the 132-pound division, was overpowered by a lot of her opponents, but she had enough success to keep her coming back. As a sophomore, with more and more girls making their way to the mat, she wrestled mostly females during the regular season and an unsanctioned end-of-the-year tournament took place for girls across the state. Joyce finished fourth.

Then, her junior year, girls wrestling became a NCHSAA-sanctioned sport with a state championship meet held. Joyce qualified for the tournament, the first female from THS to qualify, but went winless in two matches.

She was also having some personal difficulties and ended up moving in with Dana Trahan, whose son JoJo was on the wrestling team. There were a lot of major changes in a short period of time,

"I went through a lot of stuff last year, went through some things mentally," Joyce said. "Wrestling is very important to me. It was an outlet for me to escape. She took me in at a time when I needed it and she saved my life.

Her, wrestling and God."



*Senior wrestler Bliss Joyce.  
Photo provided.*

Joyce said with a new support system, she continues to work extremely hard in the weight room and on the mat. Most of the time, she has two practices a day, leaving THS and heading to club practice. Despite personal changes, her love for the sport continued.

"She is a good kid, she's overcome a lot in her life," Coggins said. "She's doing really well.

We're trying to give her some tough matches to get her ready. We have tried to schedule a lot of tournaments that also have female tournaments. There are teams we wrestle that have some female wrestlers and we'll bring four and they will have three and we'll have a dual before the boys."

Joyce is a perfect 19-0 on the season.

Coggins said he has seen a great deal of change in Joyce.

"Her physical transformation from now and her freshman year is impressive," he said.

"Any time that weight room is open, she's there. She's in a wrestling club and she loves it."

Joyce has overcome plenty of obstacles on and off the mat. She continues striving to reach her ultimate goal.

"A state championship," she said. "A state championship."



*A stand-out in a relatively new sport, Joyce is striving to reach more goals. Photo provided.*