

## Feature Review: Pinned

When I was in high school, the popular kids tended to play football and basketball, the preppy stoners suited up for the soccer team and the bookworms ran track. The wrestlers? We didn't even stereotype the wrestlers. Wouldn't even think of it. The wrestlers—those Jenny Craig-meets-Randy Couture blokes who practiced by running for hours while sweating through giant Hefty bags—always came across like the most on-edge dudes in school. You'd have to be, I guess, when a standard side effect of wrestling involves your ear ballooning into the shape of a giant cauliflower.

Simply put, wrestlers are a different breed. They train harder. They eat iced water for dinner to make weight. They endure those silly unitards and countless jokes about rolling around with other starved—and skilled—savages. And if you've ever attended a wrestling match, it's hard not to call it one of the most nerve-wracking and brutal sporting contests this side of mixed martial arts.

All of wrestling's highs and lows get thrown onto the mat in *Pinned*. Directors Patrick and Mike Nolan focus on two high school programs in suburban Ohio—the middling Lakewood squad, and its rare championship contender, Matt Curley, and the St. Edward juggernaut, a private school located a few miles from Lakewood and led by the unstoppable brother duo of Lance and Collin Palmer.

Curley immediately becomes the most personable figure in the film. The product of a broken home, he's humble, dedicated and aware of his coaches' and classmates' expectations of him. But Curley, unlike the Palmer brothers, is human. Which is to say, he loses. Never is the agony of defeat more apparent than when Curley's battered body is crumpled against a locker room wall, sobbing, after an early season loss.



The Palmers, meanwhile, look incapable of weakness. Their father, a hulking former wrestler who believes St. Ed would be even more dominant if he were coach, beams with pride about the relentless ethic he's instilled in Collin and Lance. Collin, however, who's just a freshman, admits to the camera at one point that he hopes his kids never have to wrestle. It's too much pressure, he says.

Curley and the Palmers serve up some clichéd sports movie scenarios, and *Pinned* certainly follows a standard sports movie story arc, but the documentary works as hard as the wrestlers to uncover some necessary depth. The Palmers' father, for instance, owns a wild animal sideshow business. In one of the film's more memorable scenes, we see Stephen Colbert introduce a segment of his "Colbert Report" called "The Craziest Fucking Thing I've Ever Heard," and then show footage of Lance Palmer wrestling one of his father's bears at a state fair. It's as outrageous as it sounds—and a good indication of just how ingrained wrestling is in the family.

Unlike *Class C*, the award-winning high school sports doc at the 2008 festival, *Pinned* probably doesn't hold much crossover appeal. But the Normans still provide an expertly crafted sports story for those who respect, fear and perhaps fear for high school's most devoted athletes.

—Skylar Browning

Showing: Wednesday, Feb. 17, 9:45 p.m. *Pinned* is a finalist in the feature competition.