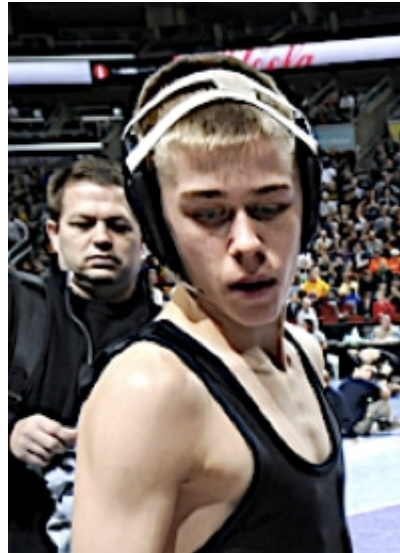




Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on February 20, 2011

## Homeschooled Wrestler Makes Championship Statement in Refusal to Fight Female

You see, when Northrup, one of the state's best 112-pound wrestlers with a record of 35 wins and only four defeats this year, realized that his first-round opponent in the high school finals would be 15-year-old Cassy Herkelman — a girl — he quietly and graciously bowed out of the match, saying that his Christian values forbade him from fighting someone of the opposite sex ([click here for video](#)).



While expressing his respect for Herkelman and another girl who were the first females ever to reach Iowa's state wrestling tournament in its 85-year history, he explained that "wrestling is a combat sport and it can get violent at times. As a matter of conscience and my faith I do not believe that it is appropriate for a boy to engage a girl in this manner. It is unfortunate that I have been placed in a situation not seen in most other high school sports in Iowa."

It is not difficult to understand where the young wrestler got his notions about how women should — and should not — be treated. His father Jamie, a minister at Believers in Grace Church in Marion, where the family attends, said that his son was raised with the understanding that "girls should be treated with dignity and respect." He added that while nothing should be taken away from the two female athletes who made it to the state finals, "wrestling is a combat sport and it gets violent at times, and my son doesn't believe that girls should be engaged in that way."

The church's head pastor, Bill Randles, explained that his congregation believes "in the elevation and respect of woman, and we don't think that wrestling a woman is the right thing to do."

The elder Northrup told the Associated Press that his son had struggled with the decision to default on the match with Herkelman. "He's poured his heart and soul into wrestling and into being the best in the state," Jamie Northrup said. "He's never won a state championship, so he's certainly looking forward to that day. So it's agonizing, from all the work and the effort and the hope. But it's easy in that, he, a long time ago, drew a line and said 'I don't believe it's right for a boy to wrestle a girl.'"

While Northrup's default allowed Cassy Herkelman to be the first female to win a match in Iowa's state wrestling tournament, she predictably went on to lose her next match to Matt Victor from Indianola in their 112-pound quarter-final contest.

The important point in this story, however, is not who won or lost an athletic competition, but that a young man chose to sacrifice a goal he had worked diligently for years to reach because he had been



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taught early on that there are more important things in life than the trophies and accolades given by men.

A true champion is someone who stands firm in defense of a high and noble ideal, regardless of the personal cost. Whether or not Joel Northrup ever goes on to win a state title in high school wrestling, one thing is certain: He has proven himself a champion.

*Photo of Joel Northrup: AP Images*



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