

## Chicchelly joining Wartburg's stellar wrestling team

Written by Jim Ecker

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Braxton Chicchelly already knew a lot about the ultra-successful Wartburg College wrestling program when he was looking to pick a school this spring.

To top it off, he got a ringing endorsement of Wartburg Coach Jim Miller from somebody he trusts.

Chicchelly's father, Chris, wrestled for Miller when Miller was an assistant coach at the University of Northern Iowa before he began his remarkable career at Wartburg.

"My dad knows him pretty well," Chicchelly said.

That closed the deal for Chicchelly, a three-time state qualifier from Xavier High School who finished fourth at 130 pounds in the Class 3A meet this year.

Chicchelly was hoping to wrestle at UNI himself, but when that did not materialize he focused on Wartburg and Coe College before selecting the Knights.

"I looked them up," he said. "I already knew about their outstanding record."

Wartburg has won eight NCAA Division III national titles since 1996 and has finished first or second in the national tournament 16 of the past 20 years under Miller. The Knights have won 19 straight Iowa Conference titles and have not lost a conference dual meet since the 1993-94

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Chicchelly knows he's joining one of the elite D-3 wrestling programs in the country. "It makes you feel pretty good," he said. "I'm excited to be a part of it."

Chicchelly enjoyed his visit to Wartburg College, which is located in Waverly. "It was phenomenal," he said. "The facilities are just outstanding.

"It just felt like the whole team is a giant family," he said. "That's what I was looking for. It just clicked really well. It feels great, knowing I can be a part of that."

Chicchelly said he'll probably aim for the 133-pound weight class at Wartburg, with 141 also a possibility. He said he plans to work on his technique and get comfortable on the wrestling mat as a freshman, then shoot for the starting lineup after that.

"I hope I can break the lineup sometime in the next four years," he said. "That's part of the goal."

Chicchelly had knee surgery after the state wrestling tournament this year to repair a torn meniscus in his knee. He was sidelined for five or six weeks, then joined the Xavier soccer team this spring and helped the Saints win the state title as one of the captains.

"I'm 100 percent," he said.

Chicchelly also played football at Xavier. He said he plans to major in pre-law at Wartburg.