

Robles Does Not Win (Excellence in Sports Performance Yearly) *but still comes away a winner*

By John Fuller

High school national champion wrestler Anthony Robles of Mesa, AZ did not come away with the ESPY Award (Excellence in Sports Performance Yearly) for "Best Male Athlete With A Disability," but he considered himself a winner anyway.

"This has been an amazing experience," Robles said. "Whether I won or lost, I knew I was experiencing something that not many people got to do. To be nominated was just an honor itself, and I am proud that I could represent my sport at this event."

High school football player Bobby Martin, who was born with a condition called "congenital amputation" which left him with no legs, captured the award at the Kodak Theatre.

Also nominated in the category was nordic skier Steve Cook, who won three medals at the 2006 Paralympic Winter Games.

"Some people say I am an inspiration, but I look at those other athletes in my category and say the same about them," Robles said.

ESPY Award winners are determined by online fan voting, which took place at <http://www.espys.tv/> www.espys.tv. Nominees are selected by a panel of ESPN staff and esteemed journalists.

Robles' nomination marked the sixth consecutive year that a wrestler has been nominated for an ESPY Award.

Throughout the week's events, Robles was paraded around Los Angeles and Hollywood hot spots with some of the most famous athletes in the world, including NBA Finals MVP Dwayne Wade, as well as former Super Bowl MVP Tom Brady. He also visited the set of Jimmy Kimmel Live, where he met with Jimmy Kimmel, an Arizona State graduate, and Dwayne Wade.

"Meeting everyone was really cool. It was neat that a lot of the athletes said they had heard about me or read about me. I really didn't expect that," Robles said.

Life will now calm for Robles, as he will wrestle at Arizona State University, a college wrestling powerhouse. He plans to study business and aspires to someday become a sports agent or compete in mixed martial arts.

Born with just one leg, 17 year-old Robles capped off an amazing career on March 26 by winning the National High School Coaches Association (NHSCA) national title at 112 lbs. with a 9-1 victory in the finals in Pittsburgh, PA. The NHSCA invites only seniors in high school who won state titles to its national meet. Robles became the first disabled wrestler to win a title at the NHSCA national championships.

As a junior, Robles placed second in the NHSCA national championships for juniors.



The win also finished off a perfect 53-0 senior season for him. For his four-year career, Robles posted a record of 131-15 and won two Arizona high school state titles for Mesa High School. He was also undefeated as a junior. Amazingly, Anthony never wrestled until his family moved from just outside of Los Angeles to Mesa before his freshman year.

"I think God gave me a gift by only giving me one leg," Robles said after winning his national title. "Other people may not see it that way, but I do."

High school national champion wrestler Anthony Robles of Mesa, Arizona, with his mother, walk the red carpet. Photo by John Fuller.

The ESPY Awards, created by ESPN in 1993, were held at the famous Kodak Theatre in Los Angeles, California. The show was televised by ESPN on Sunday, July 16.

Past wrestling ESPY winners include Kyle Maynard in 2004 for "Best Athlete with a Disability," Cael Sanderson in 2002 for "Best Male College Athlete" and Rulon Gardner in 2001 for "Male USA Olympic Athlete." 