Anyone who sees Veritas will understand how accurate that statement is.

Last time on the mat

At the beginning of the film, Trenge's focus is all about being a national champion. Home movies his parents took show him competing in his adolescent years. Trenge also looks through some old papers where he reads the goals he wrote down in grade school.

The project began as an examination of the entire Lehigh wrestling program, where coach Strobel has built a national contender.

Strobel is a two-time former national champion in the early 1970s at Oregon State University and a former U.S. National Team coach. He has made Lehigh a power primarily by recruiting the Valley.

Trenge was one of his prized recruits, and it became apparent to Miller early on that his story would become the focus of the film. The producer found the fact that he was risking one of his five senses to compete and was dealing with the internal and external pressures of his last chance to be a national champion as a compelling premise.

Trenge, now an assistant coach at Lehigh, was having a stellar freshman season when his eyesight began bothering him late in the year. He described the feeling as someone pulling a window shade over his eye.

Doctors discovered three retinal tears, two of which occurred sometime before he enrolled. He was told he had to give up wrestling because of the danger of losing his eyesight Trenge had to miss the national meet, which many in the wrestling community believed he could win.

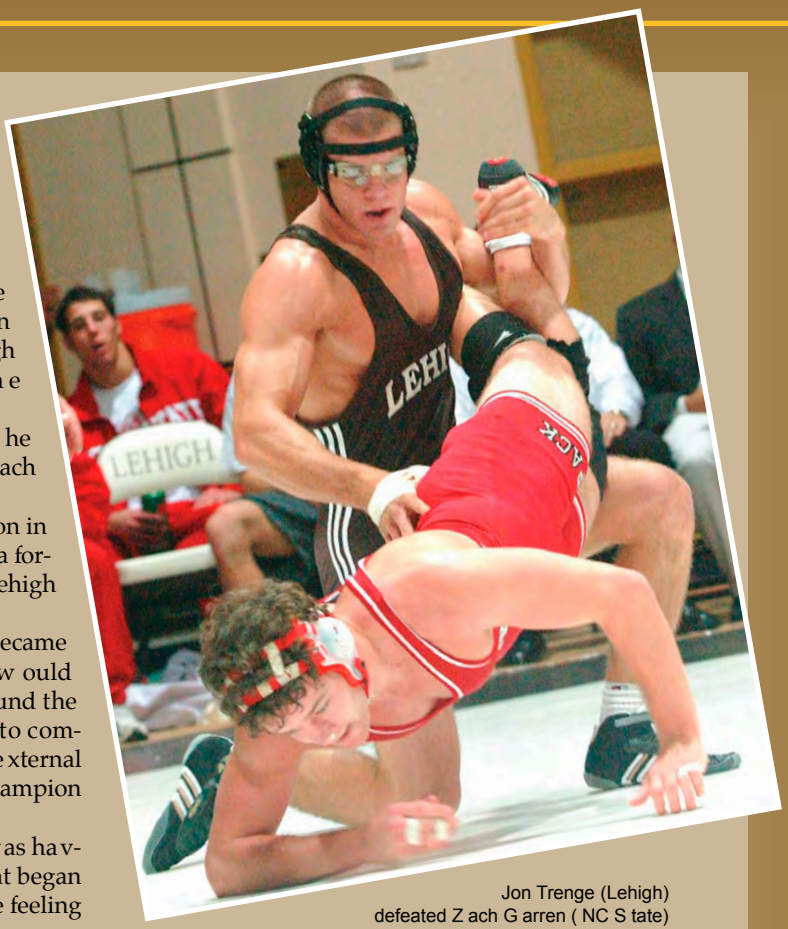
After watching from the sidelines, Trenge wouldn't accept that his career was over. His father rigged a pair of goggles that included silicone on the inner rims to protect against cuts around the eyes.

Trenge then reached the 197-pound final as a sophomore, only to lose to Iowa State's Cael Sanderson, who became the first Division I wrestler to go undefeated over a four-year career. Sanderson had previously won three national titles at 184, but moved up to Trenge's weight for his last title.

As a junior, Trenge lost to Minnesota's Damion Hahn in the final, despite leading, 3-1, with 30 seconds left. Hahn scored the winning point with just three seconds to go.

"When I lost that match, I was really depressed," Trenge said. "I started to veer off the right path a little bit I got the (Veritas) tattoo to remind me to keep doing the right things."

After a year away from collegiate wrestling in an attempt to make the U.S. Olympic Team, Trenge returned to Lehigh for his last run at accomplishing his goal.



Jon Trenge (Lehigh) defeated Zach Garren (NC State) by fall in 6:01 during a dual meet in 2004. Photo by Robert Preston.

During the season, a constant theme was played out when he wrestled. Almost all of his opponents would poke at his goggles or hit him in the face.

Trenge let some of his opponents get under his skin and retaliated with moves that caused him to be disqualified. One incident occurred at Pennsylvania State University, where Trenge dangerously threw his opponent near the end of the mat.

Strobel, who tried to get his star pupil to "worry only about things you can control," had no alternative but to suspend Trenge and urge him to see an anger-management specialist.

A critical moment in the documentary depicts the decision to allow Trenge to return to the mat against Oklahoma State University. Strobel believed that Trenge was ready to wrestle, but Trenge felt he would lose his temper and do something that would get him thrown out of a match.

After much deliberation, Trenge wrestled and won, despite the usual tactics from the opponent.