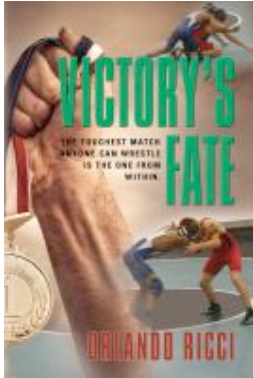


VICTORY'S FATE

THE TOUGHEST MATCH
ANYONE CAN WRESTLE
IS THE ONE FROM
WITHIN.

ORLANDO RICCI



Victory's Fate is the story of Anthony Williams, a talented high school wrestler, who is mentored by a former college wrestler, Vincent Tanzino. Everything's going perfectly for Anthony when tragedy strikes, causing his life to spiral out of control. He's thrust into a world of uncertainty and a decline in his desire to achieve the goals that he once longed for. This is the heart wrenching tale of one athlete's journey.

Victory's Fate

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Victory's Fate

Orlando Ricci

COMING SOON

Diary of a Dying Man

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Chapter One

2014 North Carolina Wrestling State Championships

Saturday: February 22, 2014

Deep below the roaring crowd of the capacity filled Greensboro Coliseum stood Anthony Williams; an athlete who possessed an unquenchable thirst for success. He awaited his opportunity to reach the pinnacle of his career, a North Carolina High School Wrestling State Championship. The 5'9" and 152 pound junior at Parkside High School was just a few weeks shy of his seventeenth birthday. Anthony possessed a chiseled physique to go along with his mixed ethnicity, which only added to his handsome features, making him desirable to many females that he came in contact with. But he wasn't all looks, as he was also one of the brightest students at his high school and an overall good kid, who had learned many valuable lessons on respect, responsibility, and how to treat others from his parents and his coach.

Anthony Williams proudly represented Parkside High School, a large school located in Charlotte, North Carolina. Parkside was known for its diverse population of students who came there from different sections of the city and its outskirts. Some of the most influential families sent their children to Parkside, while other students came from a lower socio-economic environment. This provided Parkside with a unique intertwining of cultures and ideas, but one that worked extremely well, as the school was recognized for its academics and its production of elite athletes.

Anthony was joined by his coach, Vincent Tanzino, who was in his third season at the helm of the Parkside Mustangs. Vincent was originally from New York and descended from an Italian-American family, which led to his short and stocky stature. Vincent was only 5'7" and weighed around 180 pounds, but he was extremely well built

for being in his mid-twenties. He lifted weights and worked out regularly, which helped keep his muscle mass from his days as a college wrestler at West Virginia University. He had dark black hair, with deep brown eyes and an olive complexion.

Vincent was one of the younger and more attractive teachers. He was beloved at Parkside High School, where he had taught and coached ever since he graduated from college. The students and the athletes respected his hard-nosed northern ways, as they knew that he truly had their best interests in mind. His dedication and determination was unmatched as he provided everyone with real life lessons that he intertwined with his lectures and his practices.

Vincent's continuous efforts throughout his first three seasons had built the program into a powerhouse. He did so through the use of hard work and an unparalleled dedication to the success of the team and its' athletes. Vincent would do anything he could to help his wrestlers on and off of the mat, as he not only taught them how to wrestle, but he always preached the importance of getting an education. He knew how difficult life could be, but he wanted to give those he came in contact with every possible advantage for success.

Vincent used motivational techniques to inspire those he came in contact with, and taught them that tough times are just the challenges that we go through in order to find out who we are and what we're made of. He used various quotes and philosophies to educate and to motivate his students and athletes to be strong as well as to never give up, no matter how difficult of a situation they were facing. Ultimately his goal was to provide as many of his athletes with the ability to compete at the next level and to do so on an athletic scholarship. He felt that by following his program, his athletes would truly have an opportunity for a better life.

All of which led to this moment, an opportunity for Anthony to wrestle to become a state champion and a chance for Vincent to coach one. As the exuberant crowd cheered on the competitors currently on the mat above, Anthony and Vincent were getting mentally and physically prepared for the upcoming bout. They were in an area that was specifically set up for athletes to complete their warm-ups prior to stepping foot on the mat in front of the capacity crowd that awaited

them. It had two sections of a mat so that the athletes could do whatever they deemed necessary prior to their match, along with a few chairs and a public address system, allowing the competitors to hear their names being called. Anthony was filled with excitement as he anticipated his opportunity to wrestle the most important match of his young career.

Anthony was in the middle of warming up which consisted of shadow wrestling while taking this time to visualize the upcoming bout, a technique that he had grown accustomed to doing and had worked extremely well for him. Anthony had a hard sweat going underneath his warm-ups, which covered his championship singlet that was specially made for a match just like this one. The singlet was bright white, with the word 'Mustangs' written in block letters down the back in Carolina blue, along with the picture of a silver Mustang with a black outline located on the left leg. It was only to be worn when one of the Parkside wrestlers made it to a finals match of a tournament, which occurred regularly for the team these days.

Once Coach Tanzino felt as though Anthony was properly warmed up, he approached him and took the opportunity to go over some last minute instructions, while encouraging his star athlete, "Remember, this is your match to take. Always set up your shots, and work for your second and third attempts if the first one doesn't work. Continue to be active and capitalize on his actions. Set the pace of the match because he won't be able to keep up with you. The match is yours for the taking!" Vincent encouragingly added, "You have more desire and talent at your age than I did, so make use of what God has blessed you with. And always remember, you won't fail!"

"I will Coach! I won't let you or my parents down," replied Anthony with a sense of determination and knowledge that he'd be victorious.

They both understood that if an athlete went into a match thinking they'd lose, then they probably would. Which is why Coach Tanzino preached how important the mind was and that the right amount of confidence, not arrogance, in one's abilities was a must.

Vincent was convinced that Anthony would win as he was by far the most talented athlete that he'd ever come across. Confidently,

Coach Tanzino replied, "I know you won't, you're too good not to! And I believe in you!"

A smile formed across Anthony's face as he was honored to be receiving such high praise from the man that he looked up to and had learned so much from. "Thanks Coach," replied Anthony. But he quickly switched his smile to a stoic look, filled with determination, focus, and an utmost desire to demolish his competition and earn the title that he had dedicated so much of his time to achieving.

At that moment the loud speaker announced, "And in the 152 pound weight class, a clash of titans. A matchup of two undefeated wrestlers as junior Anthony Williams at 41-0 takes on junior Jamie Wright at 38-0."

This prompted both wrestlers and their coaches to make their way out of the warm-up area, through the tunnel, and into the deafening arena. As they entered the arena and made their way towards the championship mat, the television announcers began discussing the upcoming bout, "These two wrestlers took similar paths throughout competition this season, having beaten everyone in their way. It's a shame that only one of them can come away as an undefeated state champion. Both were champions of their respective conferences, counties, and regionals this season. Yet, the favorite has to be Anthony Williams who is making his third trip to the state tournament; placing fifth as a freshman and third as a sophomore. He's coached by Vincent Tanzino, a former college wrestler at West Virginia University. After a successful collegiate career, he has had nothing but great fortunes in the realm of coaching. Coach Tanzino has done nearly everything except coach a state champion, but that drought might end tonight."

As the announcers finished introducing the competitors, both wrestlers and their coaches reached the center mat, which was where the battle was about to ensue. Jamie appeared nervous, while Anthony seemed anxious to get this bout underway, but confident in his ability to win. Both wrestlers finished getting ready by taking off their warm-ups, strapping up their headgear, and walking to the center of the mat to place their designated colored ankle band on their ankle and await the officials whistle. Anthony grabbed the green anklet and placed it

on his right ankle, while Jamie grabbed the red one that matched his singlet and did the same. The ankle bands helped the official indicate which competitor had earned points, so that the scorers could keep an accurate point total.

As Anthony placed himself in the center of the mat, he was filled with an overwhelming sense of peace and calm, almost as if it was already in the stars for him to win this match. Just like he had played this exact moment over and over again in his head a thousand times, envisioning having his hand raised by the official, hugging Coach Tanzino and then his parents, who he imagined were overcome with joy as they smiled from ear to ear, completely proud of his accomplishment. Over the roaring crowd, he heard Coach Tanzino's final words, "This is your match to take. Set the pace and victory will be yours."

Once Jamie joined Anthony in the middle of the mat, the referee had them shake hands. Once this final pre-match task was completed, the referee immediately blew his whistle and both athletes began wrestling the other.

Anthony quickly attacked Jamie's head and worked towards gaining inside control. He maneuvered to have his right forearm placed squarely against Jamie's left clavicle, while Anthony's hand was locked firmly in place on the back of Jamie's neck. Anthony forced a substantial amount of pressure against his opponents' head, while maneuvering his left hand to obtain an inside position, by placing it on Jamie's shoulder, and gaining the ability to completely control his opponents' upper body.

Once Anthony was in position, he took a high crotch shot, but Jamie countered the move by quickly sprawling and re-shooting a single leg shot. The momentum of Jamie's shot sent both athletes out of the circle and out of bounds. The referee blew his whistle to stop the action, causing both competitors to quickly make their way back to the center of the mat.

Once they were both set, the referee blew his whistle to get the bout started again. Anthony continued to control the pace of the match as he began hand fighting, something he had grown dominant with, because Coach Tanzino placed it of the utmost importance.

Anthony immediately grabbed a Russian tie, popped Jamie's right arm up into the air, opening up his legs, and quickly took a deep double leg shot. This time he was successful, earning two points for the takedown and a 2-0 lead. Jamie immediately recovered by bellying out, as he threw his stomach to the mat to prevent giving up any more points.

As Jamie maneuvered to have his hips facing the mat, Anthony wrapped his left leg around the inside of Jamie's left leg as he began to ride legs on his opponent, a position that he loved to be in and used as a means to control his competition; a skill that would undoubtedly assist him in his collegiate career. In spite of his dominant position and repeated attempts to earn back points, Anthony was unsuccessful in adding to his lead in the first period, leaving the score at 2-0 in his favor.

The referee flipped his coin, which landed on the mat with the green side up. Since Anthony was designated as the green wrestler, he earned the option of top, bottom, neutral, or to defer his choice to the third period. Anthony looked at Coach Tanzino who waved his hands in front of him indicating for Anthony to defer the choice to Jamie, which would allow him to choose what he wanted in the third period. This was nothing unusual, as Coach Tanzino generally preferred to have the final choice in a match.

Once the referee gave Jamie the choice, he immediately indicated that he wanted to be in the down position to start the second period. Jamie made his way to the center of the mat and set himself up in the bottom position, placing his knees and hands in back of and in front of the rectangle that was located in the center circle.

Once the official knew that Jamie was set, he told Anthony to get on top, prompting Anthony to move to Jamie's right side, placing his left hand on Jamie's stomach and his right hand on Jamie's right elbow. The referee made sure everyone was properly set before blowing his whistle to initiate the action in the second period.

Jamie tried to hit a stand-up, but as he attempted to lift his right leg up off of the mat, he was prevented by Anthony's counter of a tight waist and ankle. Anthony's action broke Jamie down, causing him to be flat on the mat. Jamie repeatedly attempted to get back to

his base, but Anthony's constant forward pressure continuously broke him flat, while he tried on several occasions to turn Jamie to his back. However, neither was successful at accomplishing their moves as half of the period had already evaporated.

After numerous attempts, Jamie used every ounce of strength he could muster up as he finally returned to his base before emanating a burst of energy and speed as he successfully kicked his left leg out from underneath him, thrusting his body outwards and sinking his left hand underneath Anthony's left leg, before using his positioning to pull his body behind Anthony. The sit out to a switch that Jamie just hit, earned him two points for a reversal and knotting the score at two apiece. Jamie was now on top, doing his best to turn Anthony towards his back to earn back points and the lead; yet, he was unable to do so, as Anthony countered each of Jamie's attempts.

Both wrestlers continued to attempt various moves intended to take control of the match. Anthony cleared some space between him and his opponent as he set up and then attempted to execute a Granby Roll, but Jamie was able to counter the move by following along with a Granby of his own. This action placed Jamie in a crab riding position, causing both athletes to be sitting on their butts, while Anthony was cradled in-between Jamie's legs. On several occasions, Jamie tried to throw a leg in and earn a dominant position, but Anthony stayed tight, by keeping his arms close to his body and pulling Jamie's legs out from in-between his after each attempt, which prevented Jamie from gaining an advantage. As the seconds ticked away, neither wrestler was able to earn any points; leaving the score tied at 2-2.

It was now Anthony's choice in the third period. He looked at Coach Tanzino who pointed down, indicating that he wanted Anthony to choose the bottom position, because this gave Anthony the best chance at earning points and the lead. Once both wrestlers were set, the referee blew his whistle to start the third and final period, but was forced to immediately blow his whistle again. He put his left arm up in the air and made what looked like a 'C' with his hand. This told everyone that Jamie had moved prior to the whistle and earned himself a caution.

Anthony knew that this might give him a slight edge because Jamie likely wouldn't move as quickly this time in order to prevent getting a second caution call and become one step closer to giving Anthony a penalty point. After they had gotten reset, the referee blew his whistle once again, prompting Anthony to shoot up like a projectile out of a cannon. He got to his feet and separated his body from Jamie's before turning so that they were now standing face to face. This explosion earned Anthony one point for an escape and the lead again at 3-2 with 1:55 left on the clock in the third period.

Anthony knew that he was about to accomplish his dream of winning a state title, but he had to close out the third period before the victory would be his. Both athletes continued to work towards setting up their shots and earning a takedown, but the time seemed to be against Jamie as the clock rapidly dissipated. With 30 seconds left, Anthony felt as though he was in the perfect position as he took a single leg shot, but Jamie's hard sprawl prevented the takedown. Instead of having earned any points, Anthony was now flat on the mat with outstretched arms as he was forced to do whatever he could to hold onto Jamie's left leg. The roar of the crowd grew, barely allowing either wrestler to hear their respective coaches, who were only feet away from them, and yelling out instructions.

Coach Tanzino kept yelling for Anthony to keep a tight grip and to suck the leg up to his chest. While Jamie's coach instructed him to break Anthony's grip and spin behind to earn a takedown and the victory.

The tension was extremely high as both wrestlers tried to comply with their coaches' wishes. As Jamie pushed down on Anthony's head and tried ripping his fingers apart, Anthony's grip began to loosen up. He tried his best to hold on, but his fingers began to slip from the pressure being placed against them and the sweat that had accumulated throughout the bout; eventually causing them to separate. The seconds ticked away as Jamie tried to spin behind, but Anthony drove his left arm up into the air preventing his opponent from moving behind him. Jamie quickly pounded on Anthony's head and began to spin the other way. This time, Anthony threw up his right arm to grab Jamie's leg, but the only thing he grabbed was air as

Jamie was already past that point and had successfully spun behind. The referee threw up his left arm and held up two fingers indicating that Jamie had earned two points for the takedown.

The clock read three, two, one and the horn sounded letting everyone know that the period and the match had ended, giving Jamie Wright the victory over Anthony Williams by the final score of 4-3. Jamie immediately jumped up in jubilation as he just won what both badly coveted; the state title. Anthony slowly got up, as he was understandably upset that a poor attempt at a takedown had caused him to lose the match; a haunting mistake that he'd inevitably play over in his head countless times for the rest of his life or at least until he exacted revenge.

Anthony made his way to the center of the mat so that he could show good sportsmanship by shaking hands. After the handshake, the referee raised Jamie's arm as they turned in a complete circle, facing each member of the crowd, and indicating that he had won the 2014 North Carolina State Championship at 152 pounds to all of the fans in the arena. Cheers were heard by the capacity crowd as they had just watched two gladiators battle in an exhilarating match.

As the official let go of Jamie's arm, he ran over to his coach, exuberantly jumping into his arms, while Anthony slowly walked over to Coach Tanzino, who gave him a warm embrace. Coach Tanzino knew how hard Anthony had worked and how disappointed he must be feeling, but Vincent wanted to let Anthony know just how proud he was of his effort, while easing his pain. "Anthony, you fought hard, I'm proud of you. You had a great season, and you still have one more left."

With a hint of dejection, Anthony responded, "I know Coach T., but I wanted to get this state title badly for all of the sacrifices that you and my parents have made for me."

Vincent knew how difficult this was for Anthony, but he wanted to encourage an athlete who had become family to him, "There were no sacrifices made. We all love you and want nothing more than the best for you. I know that your parents are happy to do anything they can and are always proud of your accomplishments on and off the mat. You continue to improve and become one of the best high school

wrestlers in the nation. Just think of everything that you've accomplished. You've only been wrestling for three years and you've already been to the state tournament three times. Most wrestlers would love to have accomplished all of that. Don't look at this as a negative, but as a chance for you to learn and to refocus for the bright future you have ahead of you."

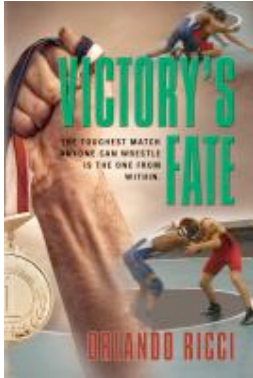
This made Anthony feel a little better, "Thanks T. I know we'll get everyone next year, but I need to start by beating everyone this off-season." Anthony was determined to never have this feeling again. To never know what it was like to miss a golden opportunity at achieving his ultimate goal.

"That's the right attitude!" exclaimed Vincent. "We'll take a day or two off and get ready for the off-season tournaments and wrestling camps this summer."

"I don't need any time off," retorted Anthony, "I'm ready to begin training as soon as possible." Anthony knew that in order to achieve the success that he desired, he needed to get right back to work as he believed that time off would only make him weak.

Coach Tanzino smiled as he knew he would have felt the exact same way when he was in high school, "Okay, we'll work out tomorrow. Let's go get you to your parents and the team. I'm sure everyone wants to see you."

Anthony and Vincent made their way back into the same tunnel that only moments earlier they had walked out of with high hopes of accomplishing their goal of obtaining a state championship. They left knowing that this would be the most important off-season of Anthony's career as there was a lot of hard work to be done in order to prepare Anthony to obtain the title that had eluded him so far in his illustrious career.



Victory's Fate is the story of Anthony Williams, a talented high school wrestler, who is mentored by a former college wrestler, Vincent Tanzino. Everything's going perfectly for Anthony when tragedy strikes, causing his life to spiral out of control. He's thrust into a world of uncertainty and a decline in his desire to achieve the goals that he once longed for. This is the heart wrenching tale of one athlete's journey.

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