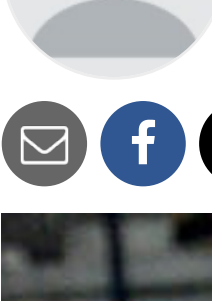
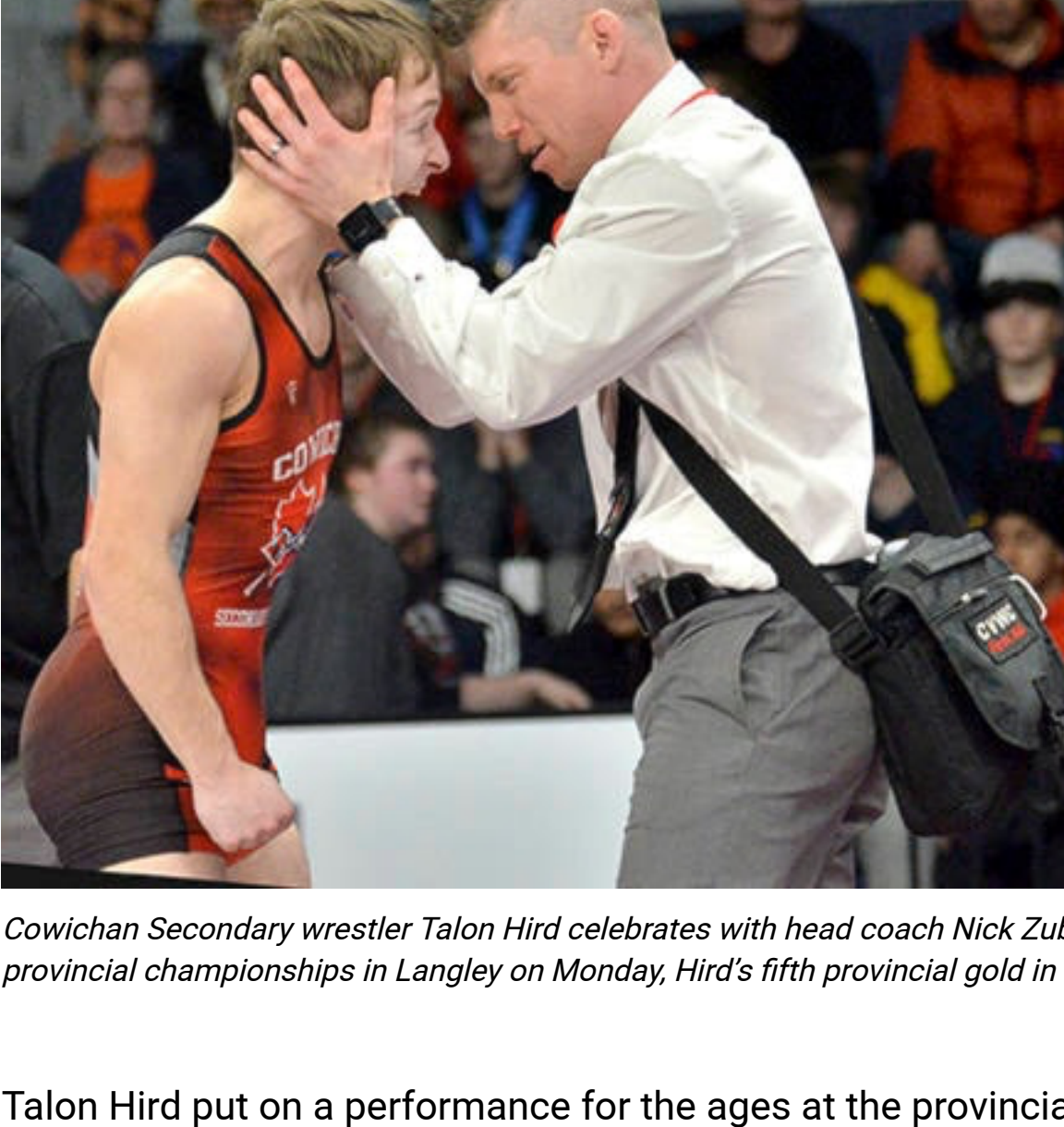


Cowichan wrestler wins historic fifth gold in five years

Talon Hird becomes fifth in history to go five-for-five in winning high school titles



[Kevin Rothbauer](#)
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Cowichan Secondary wrestler Talon Hird celebrates with head coach Nick Zuback after winning the male 54kg class at the provincial championships in Langley on Monday, Hird's fifth provincial gold in five years. (Gary Ahuja/Langley Events Centre)

Talon Hird put on a performance for the ages at the provincial high school wrestling championships in Langley.

In the 56-year history of high school wrestling in B.C., only four wrestlers had won gold in all five years of their eligibility. Hird's victory in the male 54kg class at the provincial meet that finished on Monday made him the fifth. He was also named the Most Outstanding Boys Wrestler at the meet, securing his status of possibly the most dominant high school wrestler of the era.

"It feels spectacular," Hird said. "Five years of hard work and determination all came to fruition. It's like a saga; all of my goals came towards this.

"To win all five is something I'm definitely proud of. I never let up in my commitment to always keep improving."

On his way to a historic fifth-straight gold medal, the standout from Cowichan Secondary School and the Cowichan Valley Wrestling Club not only won all his matches, but he didn't concede a single point, and his longest match lasted a mere 29 seconds.

"He was collected the whole time, dialed in," CVWC head coach Nick Zuback said. "His game plan was flawless."

High school wrestling divides competitors by weight class instead of age, so Hird has been crushing the competition since he was in Grade 8 and taking on Grade 12 wrestlers. It takes more than just strength and skill to pull that off over half a decade.

"It's kind of a testament to my consistency," Hird suggested. "When you're winning, you sometimes forget to work hard; you think you can slack once you're better than the competition."

Zuback had similar thoughts.

"He was leaps and bounds above the competition [at provincials]," Zuback said. "It's been his goal since he started and won his first title. Sometimes, when you keep winning, you can lose your focus and become complacent. But he kept his focus and stayed on his path the entire time. He has continued to strive for excellence and strive for a higher level."

That level of focus is visible in all aspects of Hird's life, noted Zuback, who recruited Hird to the wrestling team when he taught him at Queen of Angels School.

"He's a humble, well-mannered kid," the coach said. "His academics are just as important as his athletics. Everything he does, he puts 110 per cent into it."

Hird was certainly conscious that he had the chance to make history.

"I've been thinking about it for months," he admitted. "I'd say the pressure has been mounting for a while. I've had it on my mind for a long time."

Everything set in as soon as his final match, the 29-second victory over Rohit Bal of Tamanawis, was finished.

"It hit as soon as my hand was raised," Hird said. "As soon as I scored the last point."

Hird's dominance at the 2020 provincials was not lost on organizers, who named him the top male athlete at the meet. The award was presented by Brad Caulfield, the first-ever five-time B.C., who dominated from 1969 to 1973.

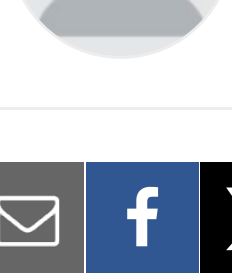
"Being named MVP of the tournament was great for him, too," Zuback said. "It's a feather in his cap and for us as Cowichan, too."

There's no time to rest after winning provincials, as Hird will head to nationals at the end of next month. He's also talking to a few different universities about attending on a wrestling scholarship and taking engineering, and his longer-term goals include competing for the national team and perhaps going to the Olympics. None of it is unrealistic.

"The doors are all open," he said. "Anything can happen."



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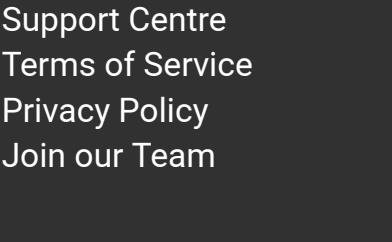
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