



**Perkins County senior Austin Thelander is hoisted up by his jubilant wrestling coach Dean Friedel after taking the gold at the Nebraska State Wrestling Tournament Feb. 14-16. Assistant Coach Todd Ford also expresses excitement over Thelander's victory at CenturyLink Center in Omaha. Until Saturday, no wrestler in Perkins County has claimed a state title since inception of the sport in the county's schools in the early 90s. Perkins County was among 65 Class D schools represented at the state meet, finishing in the top ten with seventh place. Three other senior classmates, Vinny Ross (second place), Mark Hanson and Trey Johnson also took the trip to state this year to compete in NSAA. The two medalists were escorted into town when they returned by the Grant Fire Department. More photos and results from the tournament appear in "Sports."**

(Imperial Republican photo)