

## **Jace Malek (Deceased: 1997-2016)**

### **MEDAL OF COURAGE**

**Reardan High School: (2001-2012)**

**West Valley High School: (2012-2015)**

Jace David Malek was born February 17, 1997 in Roseburg Oregon and was passionate from the start and grew up with a love of John Wayne and all things cowboy, hunting, sports and most especially his family. Quite the athlete, he was involved with sports almost his entire life. He started out wrestling at a very young age and improved as much as he grew. He placed 2nd in State his freshman year for Reardan High School then placed 2nd at State as a sophomore and junior for West Valley High School. Jace completed his high school wrestling career with a phenomenal 101 wins and 8 losses. At the same time, Jace had an outstanding high school football career, a four year starter at offense and defense as a fullback and defensive end. Jace was extended a full football scholarship in September of 2014 becoming the first committed athlete for the University of Idaho Vandals class of 2015.

The pain began in the summer of 2014. The nagging pain in his hip dogged him through his senior season as an Eagle wrestler and revealed after an MRI that Jace was diagnosed with late stage osteosarcoma in January of 2015. Jace began the chemotherapy treatments immediately ending his high school wrestling career prior to the state tournament his senior year. The University of Idaho honored his football scholarship and on February 4<sup>th</sup> Jace signed his Letter of Intent and was presented his No.99 jersey and a football signed by the entire football team. Amid his treatment, Jace focused on staying positive. Maintaining a normal lifestyle was key to him. In July the doctors were forced to amputate his right leg from the hip down. In September doctors informed Jace that his four rounds of chemo hadn't worked, and that treatment was no longer an option. He had just three to five months to live.

Even after cancer had taken his leg, Malek refused to let cancer drive him to his knees in surrender and never let it drive the megawatt smile from his face. The Valdal Coaching staff named Jace a Student Assistant Coach with him on the sidelines cheering on his teammates. In May of 2014, Jace started dating Libby Nunley and on October 25<sup>th</sup>, 2015, they were married in a beautiful ceremony in Rockford, WA. He adored Libby and she was a devoted wife. Though their marriage was cut short, it encompassed more than some marriages do in a lifetime.

Jace passed away peacefully at home in his Grandpa Fred's cabin, surrounded by his immediate family on Sunday February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2016. He is survived by his wife Libby; mother Anna Ackerman; father Dan Malek; brother Tate; and sister Kathryn;

many grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. In May of 2016, the Washington Interscholastic Activities Association created the Jace Malek True Spirit Award to be presented annually. The first award was presented to Malek's family who accepted the award before the West Valley High School studentbody. The WIAA Award will guarantee that the story of how Jace Malek lived his life will be a model for all in the future.

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