

Hero's welcome greets wrestler after controversial Olympic loss

By Mark Davis

Lincoln citizens welcomed home Abdurrahim Kuzu, Olympic Greco-Roman wrestler, with a cross-town parade and hero's ceremonies at East Park Plaza Saturday.

Despite a controversial loss in the 136.5-pound weight division, Kuzu was given a key to the city and made Honorary Mayor for a day by Mayor Roland Luedtke. Sen. Don Wesely of Lincoln presented Kuzu with an honorary admiralship in the mythical Nebraska Navy and Rep. Doug Bereuter presented Kuzu with an American flag that was flown over the state capitol during the Olympic games.

Kuzu, waving to the crowd and embracing the American flag, said that it was the greatest moment of his life.

"They couldn't take the gold from me on the mat, they had to take it from me on the table," Kuzu said, referring to a late judging decision that cost him a match he thought he had won.

But after his warm welcome to Lincoln, where he and his brothers own Kuzu's Kebab at 297 F St. and 220 N. 66th St., Kuzu announced that he would try again for Olympic gold in the 1988 Olympics in Seoul, Korea.

"I will work twice as hard so there are no close decisions next time I go for the gold," Kuzu said.

Sen. Wesely said, "I know how disappointed he was in not winning the gold. But in our book, in my book, in all of us here, he is gold medal all the way."

Kuzu's brothers, Mustafa and Ibrahim, presented Kuzu with welcome-home signs with the signatures of patrons of the brothers' business. Ibrahim Kuzi said that he and Mustafa missed their brother while he wrestled.

"Mustafa has been slicing Kebab 12 hours a day while Abdurrahim was training. Now that he is back to work, Mustafa can take a vacation," Ibrahim said.

"If you add his sweat together we would have another lake in Lincoln. And he will do it again to go to the next Olympics," Ibrahim said of Abdurrahim. "He is a very hard worker, if you wrestle with him he will kill you."

Abdurrahim had to compete with 1,840 other wrestlers to qualify in his weight class. Leudtke said, "Abbie (abdurrahim's nickname) you have come here to America to work hard. You believe part of your goal has eluded you, but what you have achieved in your seven years here are lasting satisfaction."

Kuzu and his brothers immigrated to the United States seven years ago from Turkey.



Mark Davis/Daily Nebraskan

Abdurrahim Kuzu closes his eyes for a moment during a hero's welcome in his honor Saturday in Lincoln. He will soon return to training and slicing kebab until the 1988 Olympics in Seoul, Korea.

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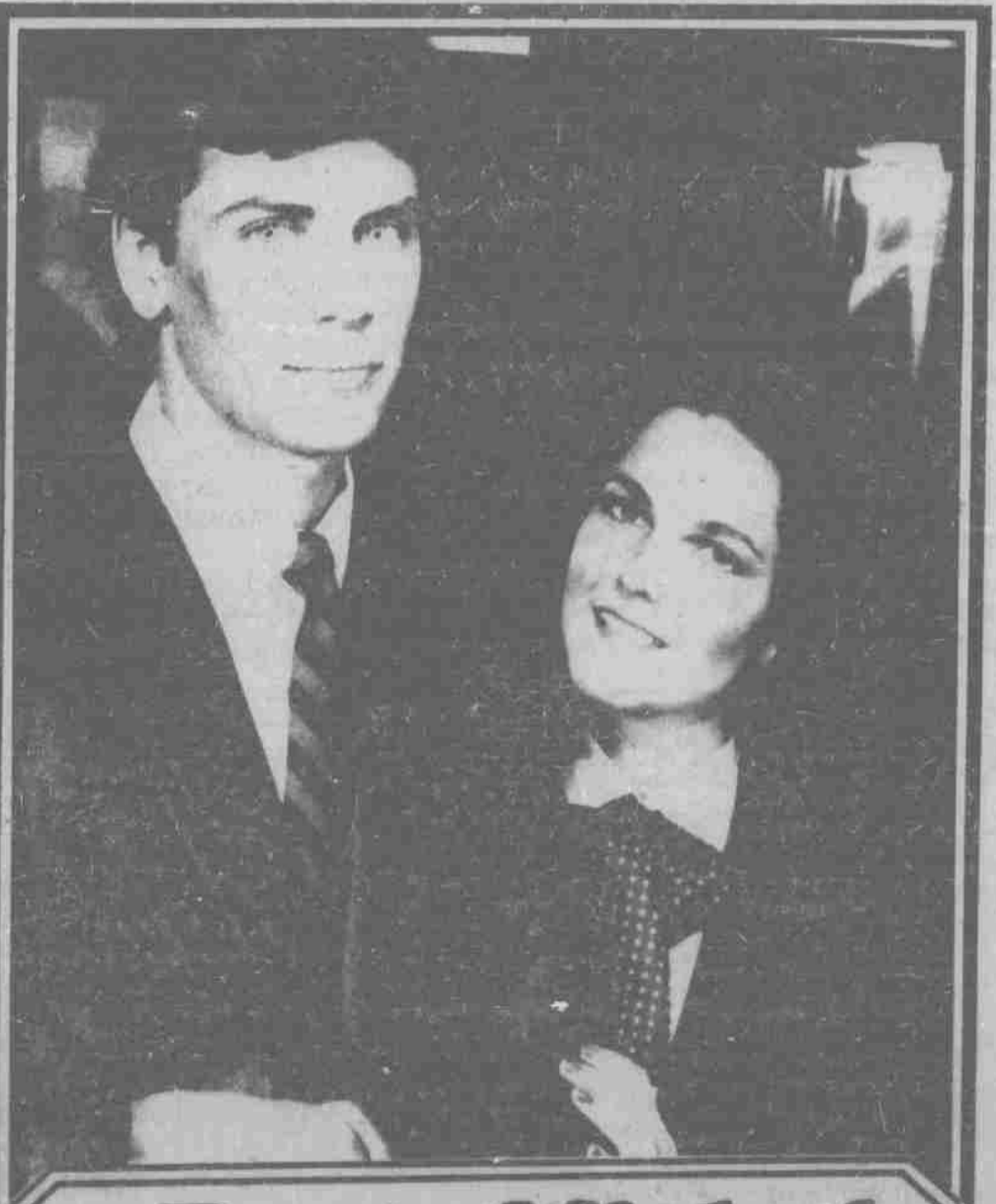
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