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Pro-wrestler's 'Creed': He will graduate from Furman

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By day, Austin Watson carries his books to class and sits quietly listening to lectures and taking notes in his classes at Furman University.

But from time to time, the 21-year-old psychology and philosophy major dons a star-spangled hat and cape and morphs into Consequences Creed, a tough-guy wrestler with one heck of an uppercut punch.

Watson, or rather his alter ego Creed, will be knocking them out at the Bi-Lo Center tonight, part of the Total Nonstop Action Wrestling: Against All Odds show, which also airs as a pay-per-view on the Spike TV network.

After graduating from Furman in May, the Atlanta native plans to go full-time with TNA Wrestling. He could start his wrestling career sooner, but Watson says he promised his mother he would finish his degree.

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Watson has loved wrestling for a long time, working with Christian Wrestling Promotion shows before coming to the attention of TNA through his work with TNA star A.J. Styles, a former Anderson College wrestler. After Watson's first TNA show last fall in Atlanta, the organization offered him a contract.

His wrestling character is inspired by "Rocky" opponent Apollo Creed, played by Carl Weathers in the 1976 film. Watson came up with his character after one of his trainers gave him one of his old vests, which was emblazoned with an American flag.

After he put on the vest, fellow wrestlers told him he looked like Apollo Creed, and a persona was born.

TNA came up with the moniker of Consequences Creed. Watson said he used to call himself Awesome Austin, but with all of the other Austins in the wrestling world, it made sense to find a more distinctive name.

The soft-spoken senior admits that wrestling seems like an odd choice for a psych major, and he says it isn't always easy to blend his two callings.

“It’s very stressful, but it’s just something I know I have to do, finish school,” Watson said. “I’ve always wanted to wrestle. ... But I love philosophy and psychology, and I wouldn’t change going to Furman for the world. I love this place.”

And the folks at Furman have been supportive of his wrestling career, Watson said. A student organization raffled off tickets for tonight’s show, and some of his professors plan to attend as well.

Even so, there are times when it feels like a balancing act, making sure he allots time for studying and turning in his school assignments, while leaving enough time for the physical demands of wrestling.

“It’s like I’m in school in two different places, but it’s something I know is gonna pay off big in the end, so it’s something I deal with.”
