

Bitetto sets sights on his fourth title

By **RON FOX**
Staff Writer

In 1997, only devout followers of junior wrestling were familiar with Mike Palo, a Belleville resident who had decided to attend St. Joseph Regional as a freshman.

A slightly more recognizable name that year belonged to Hackensack freshman Chris Bitetto, brother of State champion Rich Bitetto. Yet Palo and Bitetto quickly became prominent as each won a Bergen County championship. Both have continued winning them.

Today, as the two-day, 41st annual Bergen County Coaches Association Holiday Wrestling Tournament gets underway, each would be in line for a sweep — a fourth County gold medal. However, Palo may not be available due to injuries suffered nearly four weeks ago in an auto accident. Only two wrestlers have won four Bergen championships — Bergen Catholic's Jason Hernandez and St. Joseph's Erik Norgaard.

The team competition could be quite exciting as well. Tournament director George Jockish, after taking a preliminary look at the entries, says returning overall tournament champion Bergen Catholic, with as many as eight wrestlers likely to be seeded high, appears to be the favorite in Group 4, with Fair Lawn (10 criteria entrants), North Bergen, and Hackensack contending.

The wildest race should be in Group 3, where as many as five teams could make a run. Indian Hills finished second overall to BC last year and returns five criteria wrestlers, including State place winners Matt Shaban and Steve Becker, plus County champion Ricky LaForge, and two County runners-up.

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St. Joseph always is strong, but has a few holes in the lineup and would be hurt without Palo. A revamped Northern Highlands lineup includes five criteria wrestlers. Paramus, too, could offer a major challenge with a lineup in which 13 of 14 scored first-round wins in the Hanover Park tournament it eventually won. The one wrestler lost by one point. Garfield may enter only half a team, but most of those Boilermakers could finish high.

Group 2 could be a battle between Dumont, Lodi, and Lyndhurst, and Glen Rock appears to have the edge in Group 1, although Cresskill, Saddle Brook, and Dwight-Englewood could press the issue. Don't underestimate Wood-Ridge, which has returning champion Mike Marotta and his brother, Joe, a district and regional medalist who did not compete in the tournament last December.

Running a tournament with a 46-team field would be even more unwieldy if Jockish and his staff had not devised an alternate method of seeding. It requires coaches to fill out criteria sheets which list each team's wrestlers and their farthest advancement in major tournaments.

"It's all on computer," Jockish says. "The coaches fax in their information, I enter it [in the computer], and then I send it to Bill Crum." Crum is head of computer operations for a number of major meets, including the Bergen tournament, and is a member of the board of directors of USA Wrestling.

Moments after this morning's weigh-ins, the computer will produce the seedings, brackets, and pairings.

How long would a standard seeding meeting last if all 46 head coaches attended? "Forever," Jockish says.

Both gyms at Paramus High will be used for today's early rounds, which begin at 10 a.m. Finals are 7 p.m. Friday. Returning champions are Mike Marotta, Pascack Valley's Steve Hult (a two-time winner), LaForge, Palo, BC's James Weck (last year's Most Outstanding Wrestler), Bitetto, State champion Mike Massenzio, and Hasbrouck Heights' Morgan Horner.

If wrestlers stay at the weights at which they opened the season, Shaban will be out to make up for a Mahwah tournament loss to Ridgewood's Mark Romeo at 135, and Garfield's Ardian Ramadani will be seeking to avenge a Garfield tournament loss to Horner at 189.

Further excitement is generated at 103 where virtual unknowns often make their mark dramatically — including Palo in '97. Last year it was Mike Marotta. This year, there are State eighth-grade champion Vince Santaite of Northern Highlands and national silver medalist Bryan Nunziato of Bergen Catholic. They can be seeded because BCCA criteria recognize last year's eighth-graders who either were State champions or placed in the top six in the Cadet Nationals.

Adding to the intrigue is the presence of St. Joseph freshman Rory O'Donnell, who pinned Santaite in 1:43 in a duel meet Saturday after Santaite notched the opening takedown.

Change of fortune

Thurs Dec 28, 2000

Emerson/PR shakes off tough week

By **RON FOX**

Staff Writer

PARAMUS — Location was everything for the Emerson/Park Ridge wrestling team at the beginning of the week. But Thursday, the Cavos were bracing for a snowstorm instead of basking in a baking sun.

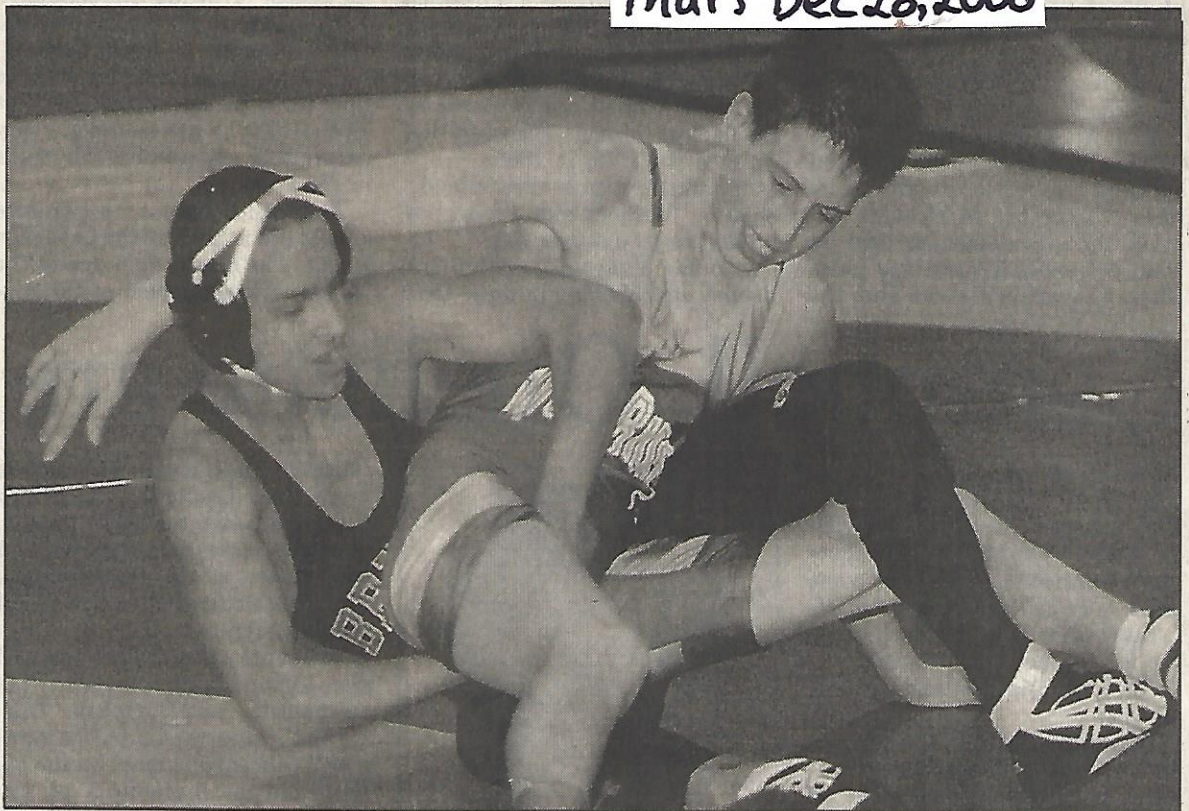
Yet one thing had not changed: a desire to excel in a wrestling tournament.

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Their trip to a tournament in Honolulu inexplicably canceled at the airport Tuesday, the wrestlers switched gears during the emotional upheaval and signed on for the 41st edition of the Bergen County Coaches Association Holiday Wrestling Tournament. They put in so strong an early effort that they appeared to be close to clinching the Group 1 team title while in the quarterfinal round.

"We were all upset about the trip getting canceled," said 171-pound sophomore Nick Calandrino, who pinned New Milford's second-seeded Mark Weber in the opening round and advanced to this morning's semifinals by pinning Vinnie Mancuso of Paramus in the quarters. "We just figured we might as well wrestle and do our best. I wanted to see what I could do and just start the season well."

The Cavos put six in the quarters during the daytime session



THOMAS E. FRANKLIN/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Alex Brito of North Bergen, left, en route to a 21-4 technical fall victory over Frank Ceoillo of Wood-Ridge.

to rank fourth overall behind Paramus, Bergen Catholic, and Northern Highlands going into the evening.

"This wasn't our first choice," coach Stan Woods said with a grin. "We'd rather be in Hawaii, but we're here. I told the kids if they didn't want to wrestle, I'd understand. But they all came."

The computer that is supposed to make organizing the tournament simpler actually suffered a glitch nearly as disastrous as the Emerson/Park Ridge cancellation. When it finally arranged the pairings for the tournament, it omitted a seed for Vince Gatto of Northern Highlands at 160 pounds. It

didn't recognize the fact that he had won a district championship last year at his old school, Buena in South Jersey. Instead of receiving a preferential seeding that he deserved, Gatto was thrown in to face the top seed at 160 pounds, Dave Amerman of Indian Hills.

Gatto pinned off a fireman's takedown in 5:30 and then advanced to the semis with an 18-7 win over Pascack Hills' rugged George Gunset.

Several wrestlers were at peak proficiency to score the biggest wins over high seeds in the quarters. St. Joseph's Rory O'Donnell (103) edged Lodi's second-seeded Mark Ramos, 6-2; Saddle

Brook's Ryan Palko (130) pinned returning silver medalist and third-seeded Dave Ferrell, and Old Tappan's Tony Diliberto (140) pinned Saddle Brook's fourth-seeded Bill Schneider.

Also, Bogota's Jason Butler (152) edged returning medalist and fourth-seeded Aaron Salma; A.J. Dolan of St. Mary's (171) downed third-seeded Anthony Sollitto of Lyndhurst, and T.J. Kroncke of Hasbrouck Heights (215) decisioned third-seeded Scott Barchetto of Paramus.

Cresskill's Chris Jasonos gave top-seeded 135 Matt Shaban, a State medalist, a battle before bowing in the quarters, 13-8.

QUARTERFINALS

103 — Brito dec. Fill, 12-7; Santaite dec. Clarida, 9-0; Nunziata pin Rooney, 3:03; O'Donnell pin Schick, 0:59; 112 — Marotta dec. Bianco, 11-4; Butcher dec. Hurley, 14-2; Strobel tech. fall Webb, 23-8 (5:44); Garcia dec. Gallucio, 6-4 (OT); 119 — Kaiser tech. fall Matteo, 18-3 (5:16); Rabelo dec. Majka, 20-6; Dunkin dec. Arlington, 8-6; Maher pin Baldan, 3:31; 125 — Laforge pin Accordini, 1:56; Galorenzo by injury default over Herman; Uffleman dec. Challenger, 4-3; Palmieri dec. Jenkins, 14-4; 130 — Hult pin Fullam, 4:08; Romeo pin Luciano, 3:28; Palko pin McSweeney, 1:27; Weck pin Grigorian, 1:21; 135 — Shaban dec. Jasonos, 13-8; Occhipinti pin Michels, 3:22; Villoslada dec. Escobar, 11-4; Marotta by injury forfeit over Angeli; 140 — McSweeney dec. Seidler, 7-1; Diliberto pin Costa, 5:58; 145 — Bitteto tech. fall McGuiness, 23-8; Bucco pin Verdel, 2:36; Lucas pin Sica, 3:05; Perez dec. Dallorso, 5-1; 152 — Becker pin Ryan, 1:20; Chacon dec. Butler, 10-2; Bussell dec. Fugnitti, 9-4; Murgolo dec. Lezzette, 10-1; 160 — Gatto dec. Gunset, 20-7; McCarthy dec. Serio, 7-0; Rinaldi dec. O'Hanlon, 7-0; Califano dec. Tabbol, 12-3; 171 — Massenzio pin Vitale, 1:46; Goodman dec. Graf, 14-0; Hunter won by disq. over Dolan; Calandrino pin Mancuso, 3:33; 189 — Ramadan dec. Hill, 12-6; Picinich dec. Malizia, 7-5; Arcadia dec. Kim, 8-6; Horner pin Panfilii, 1:44; 215 — Diorio dec. Michaud, 2-1; Walczak pin Morales, 2:48; Tedesco dec. Kroncke, 9-3; Guy pin Mazzo, 1:50; 275 — Castillo pin Giannini, 2:24; Singleton pin Van Soest, 0:31; Morris dec. Buldo, 6-3; Lees pin Heald, 2:24.

No trip to Hawaii for wrestling team

An excited array of 22 wrestlers from the Emerson/Park Ridge high school team and 53 adults saw their trip to Hawaii end at the check-in counter of Kennedy Airport on Tuesday morning.

The Cavos were scheduled to take part in a 25-team invitational tournament at Iolani High School in Honolulu. The Delta flight was reconfirmed at midnight and computers at 4 a.m. still showed the flight would be leaving on time. One parent even closed his business and paid all his employees for the week in preparation for the trip.

Buses hired for \$650, according to coach Stan Woods, transported the group to JFK. They arrived there at 6:30 a.m.

"Delta just said the flight was canceled. No explanation," Woods said. "They gave us no excuse whatsoever and they said nothing could be done. They just ruined our whole trip."

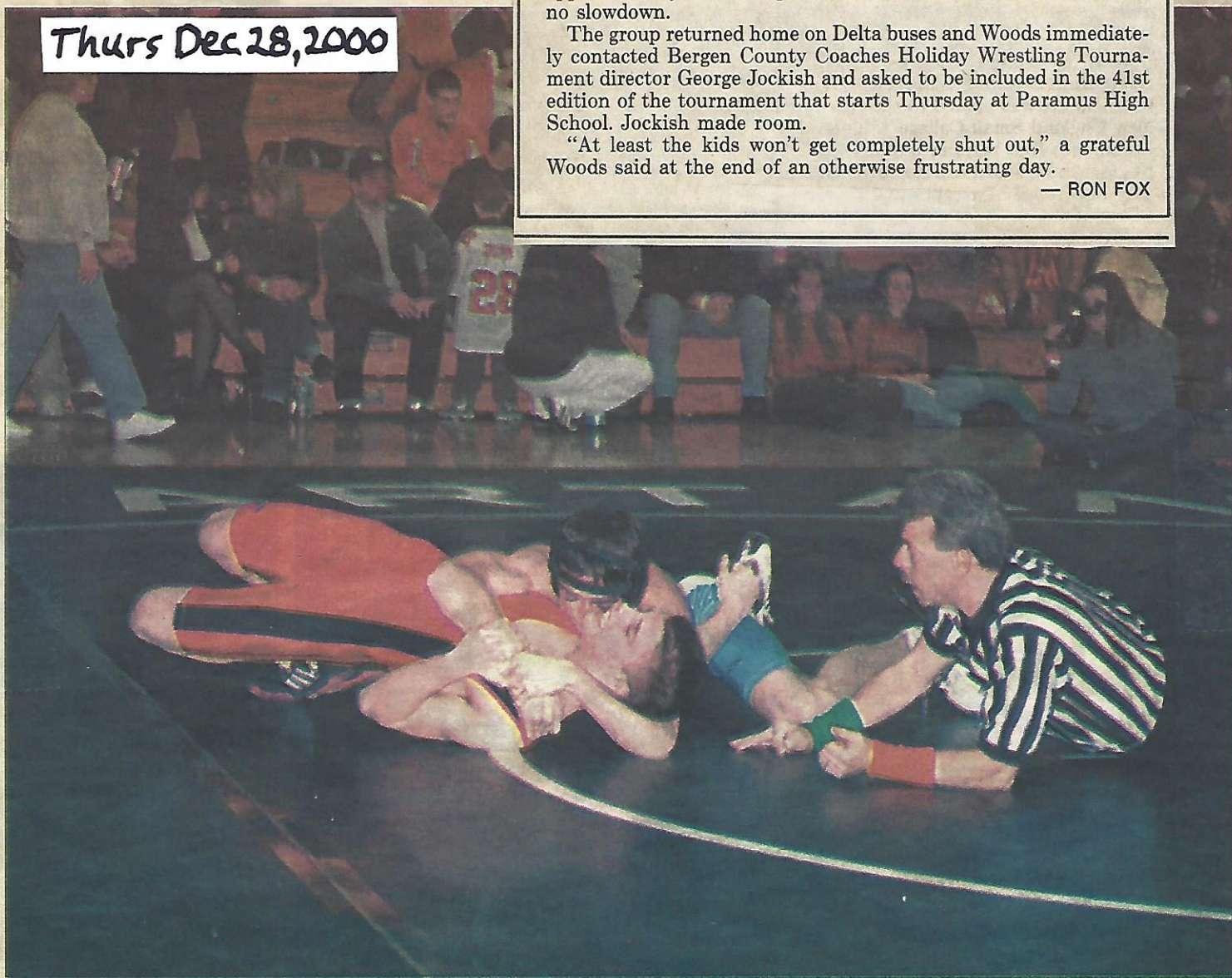
Someone suggested that Delta pilots were on strike, but pilots approached by Emerson parents insisted there was no strike and no slowdown.

The group returned home on Delta buses and Woods immediately contacted Bergen County Coaches Holiday Wrestling Tournament director George Jockish and asked to be included in the 41st edition of the tournament that starts Thursday at Paramus High School. Jockish made room.

"At least the kids won't get completely shut out," a grateful Woods said at the end of an otherwise frustrating day.

— RON FOX

Thurs Dec 28, 2000



ANTHONY VASSALLO

Pinned

Paramus Spartan James Luciano is seen here pinning Emerson/Park Ridge's A.J. Fullam at the 0:57 mark of their 130 pound match during the Bergen County Wrestling Tournament Consolation Semifinal match.

Locals learned in Fargo

Bergen Catholic freshman wins 103-pound title

By **JIM DRISCOLL**

Staff Writer

PARAMUS — Several of the champions crowned at Friday night's Bergen County Coaches Association Holiday Wrestling tournament had something in common:

They spent the last week of July in North Dakota.

But this was no vacation. Rather, they

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were representing what was known as Team New Jersey at the Cadet Nationals in Fargo.

And that's where part of the reputation Bryan Nunziato brought with him to Bergen Catholic was born. Nunziato, a freshman who pinned North Bergen's Alex Brito in 32 seconds to win the 103-pound title Friday night, finished in second place at Fargo. That's not surprising, since the 15-year-old from Carlstadt has been in five New Jersey junior State finals, winning two.

"He's a very accomplished wrestler," Bergen Catholic coach Dave Bell said of Nunziato, who is 10-1 this season with his only loss coming to one of his longtime rivals on the junior circuit, Dave Tomasette of Washington Township High School.

"I want to be modest," Bell added, choosing his words carefully, "but I think Bryan will be a State place-winner, for sure. Probably the best way to put it is he will be competing for a State championship in the future."

That's also the goal of another member of Team New Jersey who won a Bergen title on Friday night, Dumont's Anthony Dunkin. But he had a different goal in the offseason — coming back from a torn cartilage in his right knee.

The injury occurred last season against River Dell's Steve Hu, just days after

Dunkin lost a Bergen tournament final to Steve Hult of Pascack Valley. Dunkin had surgery on Jan. 28 and the six pins used to repair the damage are still in his knee.

"They said they'll dissolve after a year-and-a-half," said Dunkin, who was in control throughout his 15-7 win over North Bergen's Lou Rabelo at 119 pounds.

Dunkin, a 13th-place finisher in Fargo, gave a lot of the credit for his recovery to his coaches — Dumont's Frank Manning and Scott Stevenson, the rec coach he first started training under in the second grade. That the junior made it back and won the title didn't surprise Manning.

"He wanted this very badly," Manning said of Dunkin, who won a District 7 title as a freshman but was unable to compete in the State tournament last year. "He had his mind set on winning four District titles, but that won't happen now. So I guess his next step will be to make it to the [State finals] at the Meadowlands. Then we'll see what happens from there."

Ricky LaForge of Indian Hills, who won his second straight Bergen title Friday, was supposed to join Dunkin and Nunziato in North Dakota, but didn't feel he could cut weight, from the 130 pounds he weighed to the 114½-pound slot the team

wanted him to wrestle at. But he won a title over the summer in early July at the National High School Coaches Association Nationals in Alabama, and would like to end this season with a better finish in the State tournament.

Last year, he was eliminated from the State tournament in a controversial overtime loss.

"That's all I'm working toward now," LaForge, who pinned North Bergen's Ron Palmieri in 1:49 to win the 125-pound title, said of the State tournament. "I'm just going to do all I can to win it all this season."

Horner shines at finals

Fri Dec 29, 2000

There were plenty of thrills, chills, and spills in the championship round of the Bergen County Coaches Association Holiday Wrestling Tournament. Here's a rundown of the finals:

103 pounds

Bergen Catholic freshman Bryan Nunziato went from a spin to a trip takedown and pinned with a headlock and underhook in 32 seconds. Pinned was the top seed, junior Alex Brito of North Bergen.

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112 pounds

Repeat champion Mike Marotta, a Wood-Ridge sophomore, took the bottom position in the second quarter and pinned Pascack Hills junior Ryan Strobel in 3:13. Marotta opened with a stepover takedown and built an 8-1 lead before going from an armlock to a double underhook facing in the opposite direction for the pin.

119 pounds

Dumont junior Anthony Dunkin, who missed half of last season with a knee injury, decisioned North Bergen's Lou Rabelo, 15-7, opening with a double-leg takedown six seconds into the bout. A knee pick and two spins gained an 8-3 lead in the first period.

125 pounds

Repeat champion Ricky Laforge of Indian Hills used an armdrag that he turned into a spectacular roll, pulling North Bergen's Ron Palmieri over and beyond him. A 2-on-1 tilt soon became a 1:49 pin.

130 pounds

Last year's Most Outstanding Wrestler, Jim Weck of Bergen Catholic, was in considerable trouble against Ridge-wood junior Mark Romeo, who was fresh off a win over top-seeded, two-time champion Steve Hult of Pascack Valley in the semis. Romeo popped out for a reversal and put Weck to his back for a 6-0 lead. But Weck, who wrestled at 135 pounds last year, chose the neutral position in the third period, whizzed Romeo to his back and underhooked his head for a stunning 4:29 pin and a repeat win.

135 pounds

Indian Hills senior Matt Shaban pinned in 83 seconds after he countered a double-leg shot by Leonia senior Jon Villoslada into a quick headlock take-

down and applied a second headlock for the win.

140 pounds

Lyndhurst senior Dennis McSweeney used a solid single-leg attack to defeat New Milford junior Jon-Marc Tobin, 10-2, with four takedowns (single, single-to-double, and two spins).

145 pounds

Hackensack's Chris Bitetto became the third four-time champ in the tournament's 41-year history with a 16-3 decision over Bergen Catholic junior Brian Lucas. Bitetto caught a single-leg and steered his man by the waist for the first takedown. He stopped a strong double-leg shot in the third, spun for two more takedowns, and used a double armbars for three back points.

152 pounds

Indian Hills senior Steve Becker pinned Lodi senior Tom Murgolo in 4:43 by escaping, rolling into a takedown, and spiking the far arm. In the second period, Murgolo had reduced Becker's lead to 5-2 with a spin takedown as Becker could not maintain his backward-reaching headlock.

160 pounds

Lodi sophomore Jerry Rinaldi, who had two pins and shut out his other three opponents, stopped Northern Highlands senior Vince Gatto, 14-0. A fake duckunder turned into a workar-round opening takedown. In the second period, a reversal and armbars gained five more points. Gatto was cautioned and eventually penalized for continually anticipating the whistle and rising too quickly from the bottom position.

171 pounds

State champion Mike Massenzio, a St. Joseph senior, pinned Emerson/Park Ridge sophomore Nick Calandrino in 1:19 for a repeat title. He started with a knee pick and switched to a dump for the 2-0 lead, hooked the far arm and reached back to hook a leg to set up the pin.

189 pounds

In the feature match, Hasbrouck Heights senior Morgan Horner scored a 16-3 decision over top-seeded Ardian Ramadani, a Garfield junior, in a match of State medalists. In five sec-

onds, Horner notched a double-leg takedown off a single-leg shot. Ramadani ran for an escape and Horner drove him down with a tight-waist attack. After Ramadani switched for an escape, Horner caught a leg and kicked out the other leg, turning his powerful opponent for an 8-2 lead. Trying to turn in the third period, Ramadani was put to his back by Horner, the tournament's Most Outstanding Wrestler and a repeat champion.

215 pounds

Second-seeded Eddie Guy, a senior from Fair Lawn, downed top-seeded Bryan Diorio of Indian Hills, 7-1, starting with a full-lift takedown, adding a standing switch escape and, after Diorio faced him for a neutral point, Guy headlocked him for two back points.

Heavyweight

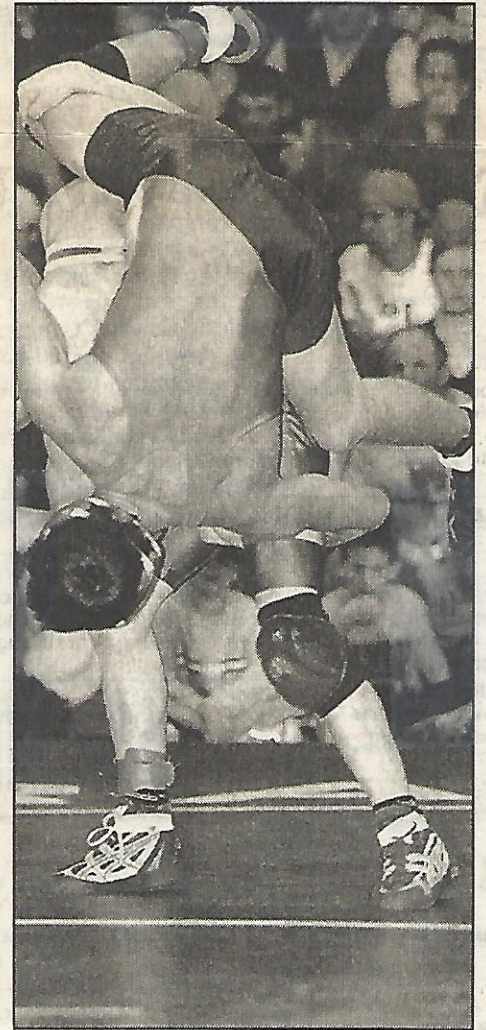
Garfield's Luis Castillo and Northern Highlands' Ian Lees went scoreless through two periods (Lees took defense in the second), but Castillo won, 1-0, by working his way up from the bottom, finally standing and turning with one minute left.

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MEL EVANS/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

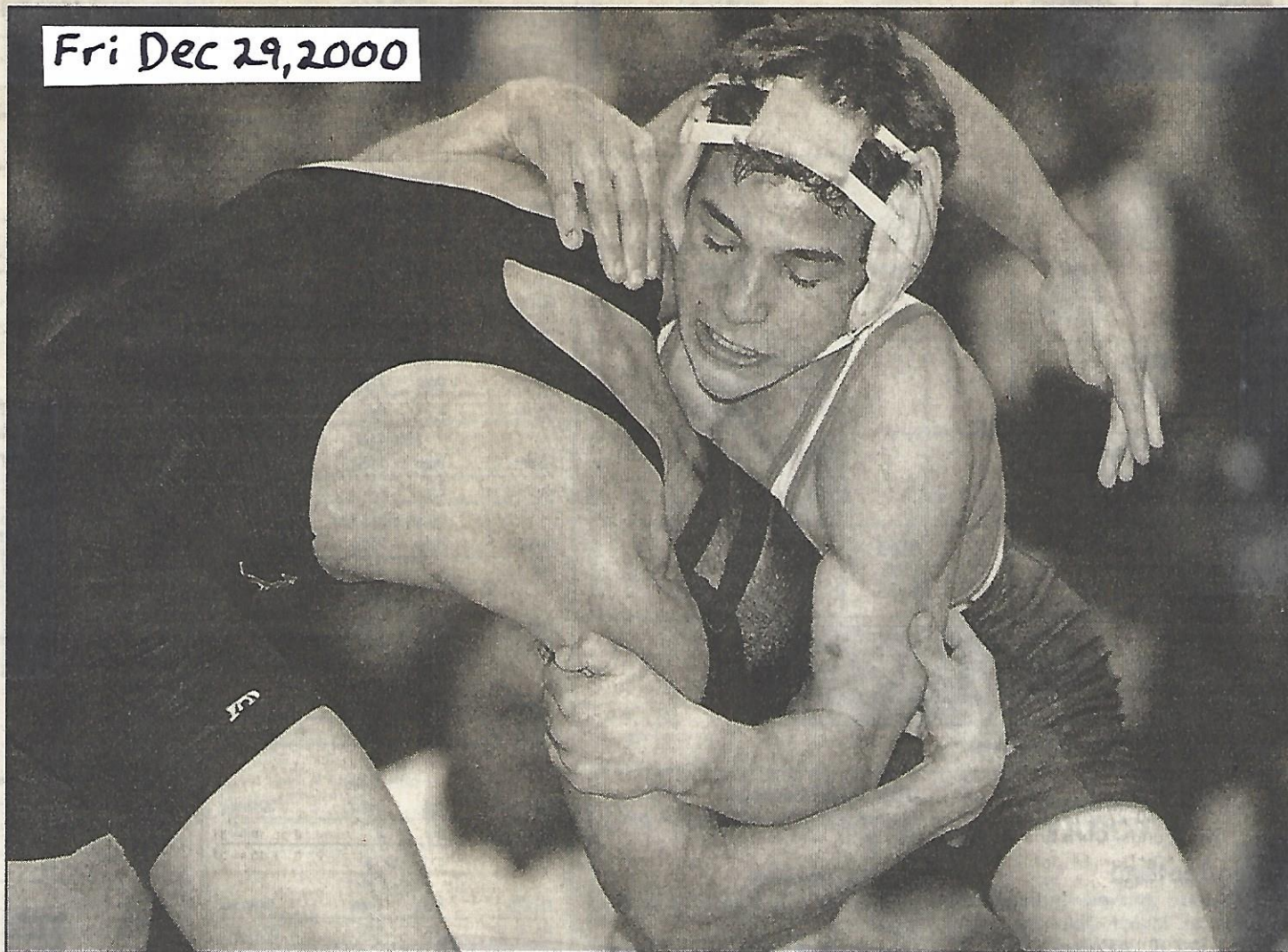
Hackensack senior Chris Bitetto is hoping to become the third wrestler ever to win a fourth straight Bergen County Coaches Association Holiday tournament crown .



TARIQ ZEHAWI/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Mike Marotta of Wood-Ridge tossing Ryan Strobel of Pascack Hills over his back in the 112-pound final.

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TARIQ ZEHAWI/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Anthony Dunkin of Dumont trying to take down North Bergen's Lou Rabelo in their 119-pound final. Dunkin won the title.

Don't be surprised if Bergen Catholic sophomore **Matt McConville** makes a name for himself in postseason tournaments. It's just that a number of substantial roadblocks have kept him overshadowed thus far.

Thursday, he drew eventual 135-pound bronze medalist **Joe Marotta** of Wood-Ridge in the second round of the preliminaries of the Bergen County Coaches Association's Holiday Wrestling Tournament and was eliminated, 11-8. A year ago, he drew another eventual third-place winner, Indian Hills veteran **Chris McDonnell**, in the preliminaries and lost, 5-1.

A few weeks later, McConville's record was 10-1 when he was struck down by a car — and sidelined for the rest of the season.

"Not enough people have seen him wrestle in the County," said BC coach **Dave Bell**, whose team repeated as champion of the two-day, 46-team tournament. "He had a great match with Marotta. It was back-and-forth. And he had a great match with McDonnell right out of the box [as a freshman] last year."

All but two BC wrestlers won in this year's preliminaries. Six reached the semifinals, but sophomore 152-pounder **Glenn Haas** (two pins) and junior 189-pounder **Tom Layman**, who had a first-round pin for only his second varsity win, also scored major points before being eliminated.

BC's 103-pound champion, freshman **Bryan Nunziato**, was dominant. And 130-pound champion **James Weck** pulled off another tremendous rally. Last year, he was voted Most Outstanding Wrestler after cradling for late points to decision **Dennis McSweeney** of Lyndhurst for the 135-pound title. McSweeney was this year's 140-pound champ and Weck, wrestling lower at 130 pounds, trailed Ridgewood's **Mark Romeo**, 6-0, before pinning for his second title.

"James is dangerous and if there's any kind of flurry, he'll come out on top," Bell said. "He reminds me of **Mike Jasonos** when I was coaching at Cresskill. He finds a way."

NOTES: St. Joseph freshman **Rory O'Donnell** has to feel good about his two wins over fellow freshman and reigning State eighth-grade champion **Vinny Santeite** of Northern Highlands — a dual-meet pin Dec. 23 and a 13-1 score for third place in the Bergen tournament. The wrestlers did not meet last year. How did he do in the eighth-grade States? "I didn't place," O'Donnell said with a smile after collecting his medal. ... Heavyweight champion **Luis Castillo** of Garfield had his hands full pinning Hackensack's **Karon Singleton** in the semis and deciding Northern Highlands' **Ian Lees**, 1-0, for the title. "It was rough; that was 550 pounds between them," an exhausted Castillo said. Singleton led, 3-2, before Castillo stepped over and pinned in 4:51. A standing switch edged Lees with one minute left. An All-State defensive lineman, Castillo says he'll visit Northwestern before making an even bigger decision — where to play football. ... Tournament director **George Jockish** took the blame for Northern Hills transfer

Vince Gatto, a District 31 champion at Buena, not being seeded at 160 pounds. Gatto instead met top-seeded **Dave Amerman** of Indian Hills in the second round and pinned. "It wasn't a computer glitch. It was a director glitch," Jockish said. ... The 215 class had

lots of power, where Ridgewood's eventual third-place finisher **Chris Walczak** dropped a tight 6-3 decision to top-seeded **Bryan Diorio** of Indian Hills in the semis before Fair Lawn's **Eddie Guy** — who took only 5:44 to pin all three of his opponents — pinned Diorio.

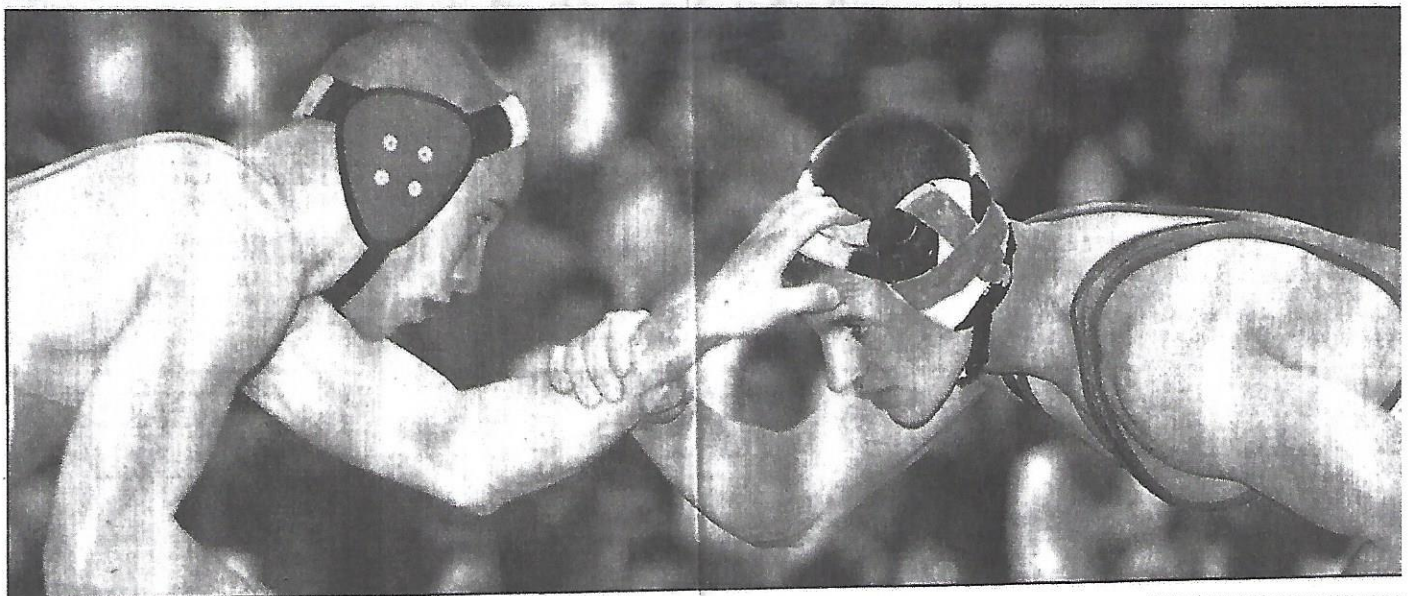
— RON FOX

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TARIQ ZEHAWI/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Eventual champion Mike Marotta of Wood-Ridge working to pin Ryan Strobel of Pascack Hills in the 112-pound title bout.



TARIQ ZEHAWI/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Dennis McSweeney of Lyndhurst, left, and Jon-Marc Tobin of New Milford going head to head in the 140-pound final. McSweeney won the title with a 10-2 decision.

BCCA HOLIDAY WRESTLING TOURNAMENT SUMMARIES

Consolation semifinals

103 — Shaun Clarida, Hackensack, pin Dallas Fill, Hasbrouck Heights, 2:15; Mike Rooney, New Milford, dec. Joe Schick, Glen Rock, 10-4.
 112 — Merlin Hurley, Garfield, pin Anthony Bianco, Emerson/Park Ridge, 5:27; Evan Gallucio, Glen Rock, dec. Matt Webb, Ridgefield, 8-1.
 119 — Nick Matteo, Ramsey, dec. Jared Majka, Saddle Brook, 7-0; Matt Arlington, Mahwah, maj. dec. Rich Baldan, Don Bosco, 8-0.
 125 — Mike Accordino, NV/Demarest, by med. forfeit over Tom Herman, Ridgefield; T.J. Challenger, Dumont, maj. dec. Alvin Jenkins, Rutherford, 15-1.
 130 — James Luciano, Paramus, pin A.J. Fullam, Emerson/Park Ridge, 0:57; Sevak Grigorian, Garfield, pin Ryan Mosweaney, NV/Old Tappan, 4:39.
 135 — Chris Jasonos, Cresskill, maj. dec. Matt Michels, Northern Highlands, 14-3; Luis Escobar, Fort Lee, won by forfeit over Eric Angell, Don Bosco.
 140 — Chris Costa, Lodi, dec. Jeff Seidler, River Dell, 8-4; Matt Marquart, Rutherford, dec. Al Morali, Paramus, 3-2.
 145 — Mike McGuinness, Emerson/Park Ridge, dec. Ed Verdel, Fair Lawn, 9-2; Mike Dallorsa, Bogota, dec. Dave Sica, Lyndhurst 6-4.
 152 — Shane Ryan, Becton, dec. Jason Butler, Bogota, 7-2; Kyle Lezzette, Dumont, dec. Eric Fugnitti, Ridgefield, 6-0.
 160 — George Gunset, Pascaack Hills, pin Tom Serio, Glen Rock, 1:38; Charles O'Hanlon, Cliffside Park, dec. Geo Tabbol, Dwight-Englewood, 7-4.
 171 — Rich Vitale, River Dell, pin Eugene Graf, Saddle Brook, 3:41; Vinny Mancuso, Paramus, bye.
 189 — Jim Malizia, St. Joseph Reg., dec. Tom Hill, Emerson/Park Ridge 4-2 (OT); Rob Panfili, Saddle Brook, pin John Kim, Dwight-Englewood, 2:22.
 215 — Ian Michaud, Northern Highlands, by disq. over Jose Morales, Don Bosco; Anthony Mazzo, Emerson/Park Ridge, pin TJ Kroncke, Hasbrouck Heights, 1:26.
 275 — Steve Van Soest, Indian Hills, pin Dan Giannini, Pascaack Hills, 2:46;

Anthony Buldo, Paramus, dec. Adam Heald, Ramsey, 11-8.

Third-place consolations

103 — Rory O'Donnell, St. Joseph, dec. Vinny Santaita, No. Highlands, 13-1; 112 — Joe Butcher, Westwood, dec. Elmer Garcia, North Bergen, 9-4; 119 — Robert Kaiser, Bergen Catholic, dec. Steve Maher, Bergenfield, 10-2; 125 — Adam Uffleman, Pascaack Hills, dec. Mike Galorenzo, Bergen Catholic, 10-9; 130 — Steve Hult, Pascaack Valley, pin Ryan Palko, Saddle Brook, 2:26; 135 — Joe Marotta, Wood-Ridge; dec. Mike Occhipinti, 13-2; 140 — Steve Owimrin, Pascaack Valley, tech. fall Tony Diliberto, NV/Old Tappan, 23-8 (4:32); 145 — Dave Bucco, Paramus, pin Brian Perez, Cresskill, 0:51; 152 — Jason Chacon, Hackensack, dec. Kyle Bussell, Ramsey, 9-1; 160 — Tim McCarthy, Bergen Catholic, dec. Mike Califano, Fair Lawn, 5-3; 171 — Ryan Goodman, Dwight-Englewood, dec. CJ Hunter, Ramapo, 11-0; 189 — Derek Picinich, Ridgefield Park, pin Josh Arcadia, No. Highlands, 2:44; 215 — Chris Walczak, Ridgewood, dec. Kevin Tedesco, Ridgefield, 3-1; 275 — Karon Singleton, Hackensack, dec. Stephen Morris, Bergen Tech, 6-1.

Fifth-place consolations

103 — Mike Rooney, New Milford, dec. Shaun Clarida, Hackensack, 11-2; 112 — Evan Gallucio, Glen Rock, dec. Merlin Hurley, Garfield, 7-0; 119 — Matt Arlington, Mahwah, dec. Nick Matteo, Ramsey, 5-3; 125 — T.J. Challenger, Dumont, pin Mike Accordino, NV/Demarest, 4:40; 130 — James Luciano, Paramus, dec. Sevak Grigorian, Garfield, 10-2; 135 — Chris Jasonos, Cresskill, dec. Luis Escobar, Fort Lee, 12-4; 140 — Matt Marquardt, Rutherford, dec. Al Morali, Paramus, 5-3; 145 — Mike Dallorsa, Bogota, pin Mike McGuinness, Emerson/Park Ridge, 4:49; 152 — Kyle Lezzette, Dumont, dec. Shane Ryan, Becton, 8-2; 160 — George Gunset, Pascaack Hills, dec. Charles O'Hanlon, Cliffside Park, 6-5; 171 — Vinny Mancuso, Paramus, dec. Rich Vitale, River Dell, 5-3; 189 — Rob Panfili, Saddle Brook, dec. Jim Malizia, St. Joseph, 2-1; 215 — Anthony Mazzo, Emerson/Park Ridge, dec. Ian Michaud, No. Highlands, 5-1; 275 — Anthony Buldo, Paramus, dec. Steve Van Soest, Indian Hills, 5-2.

Final team scores

Bergen Catholic 165, Indian Hills 133, Northern Highlands 117½, North Bergen 98, Paramus 97, Hackensack 91, Garfield 82½, Pascaack Hills 81, Emerson/Park Ridge 78, Pascaack Valley 74.
Group team champions
 Group 4 — Bergen Catholic
 Group 3 — Indian Hills
 Group 2 — Pascaack Hills
 Group 1 — Emerson/Park Ridge.
Most outstanding wrestler — Morgan Horner, Hasbrouck Heights
Most pins in quickest time — Horner, Hasb. Heights (four in 4:09)

Semifinals

103 — Alex Brito, North Bergen, dec. Vinny Santaita, Northern Highlands, 10-6; Bryan Nunziato, Bergen Catholic, dec. Rory O'Donnell, St. Joseph Reg., 8-1.
 112 — Mike Marotta, Wood-Ridge, dec. Joe Butcher, Westwood, 11-4; Ryan Strobel, Pascaack Hills, pin Elmer Garcia, North Bergen, 1:40.
 119 — Lou Rabelo, North Bergen, maj. dec. Robert Kaiser, Bergen Catholic, 18-5; Anthony Dunkin, Dumont, maj. dec. Steve Maher, Bergenfield, 15-4.
 125 — Ricky Laforge, Indian Hills, pin Mike Galorenzo, Bergen Catholic, 1:01;
 Ron Palmieri, North Bergen, dec. Adam Uffleman, Pascaack Hills, 7-5.
 130 — Mark Romeo, Ridgewood, maj. dec. Steve Hult, Pascaack Valley, 15-7; James Weck, Bergen Catholic, pin Ryan Palko, Saddle Brook, 1:40.
 135 — Matt Shaban, Indian Hills, maj. dec. Mike Occhipinti, Pascaack Valley, 17-6; Jon Villoslada, Leonia, dec. Joe Marotta, Wood-Ridge, (-1.00) 10-6.
 140 — Dennis McSweeney, Lyndhurst, maj. dec. Tony Diliberto, NV/Old Tappan, 15-1; Jon-Marc Tobin, New Milford, pin Steve Owimrin, Pascaack Valley, 3:53.

145 — Chris Bitetto, Hackensack, dec. Dave Bucco, Paramus, 14-7; Brian Lucas, Bergen Catholic, pin Brian Perez, Cresskill, 2:24.
 152 — Steve Becker, Indian Hills, dec. Jason Chacon, Hackensack, 11-10; Tom Murgolo, Lodi, maj. dec. Kyle Bussell, Ramsey, 10-0.
 160 — Vince Gatto, Northern Highlands, dec. Tim McCarthy, Bergen Catholic, 6-3; Jerry Rinaldi, Lodi, maj. dec. Mike Califano, Fair Lawn, 9-0.
 171 — Mike Massenzio, St. Joseph Reg., maj. dec. Ryan Goodman, Dwight-Englewood, 10-1; Nick Calandrino, Emerson/Park Ridge, pin CJ Hunter, Ramapo, 3:41.
 189 — Ardian Ramadani, Garfield, maj. dec. Derek Picinich, Ridgefield Park, 19-11; Morgan Horner, Hasbrouck Heights, pin Josh Arcadia, Northern Highlands, 1:51.
 215 — Brian Diorio, Indian Hills, dec. Chris Walczak, Ridgewood, 6-3; Eddie Guy, Fair Lawn, pin Kevin Tedesco, Ridgefield, 3:19.
 275 — Luis Castillo, Garfield, pin Karon Singleton, Hackensack, 4:51; Ian Lees, Northern Highlands, pin Stephen Morris, Bergen Tech, 5:13.

Finals

103 — Nunziato pin Brito, 0:32.
 112 — Marotta pin Strobel, 3:13.
 119 — Dunkin dec. Rabelo, 15-7.
 125 — Laforge pin Palmieri, 1:49.
 130 — Weck pin Romeo, 4:29.
 135 — Shaban pin Villoslada, 1:23.
 140 — McSweeney dec. Tobin, 10-2.
 145 — Bitetto dec. Lucas, 16-3.
 152 — Becker pin Murgolo, 4:43.
 160 — Rinaldi dec. Gatto, 14-0.
 171 — Massenzio pin Calandrino, 1:19.
 189 — Horner dec. Ramadani, 16-3.
 215 — Guy dec. Diorio, 7-1.
 275 — Castillo dec. Lees, 1-0.

WRESTLING

Bergen County Freshman at Bergenfield

TEAM SCORES: Don Bosco Prep (DBP) 78, Ridgefield Park (RP) 70, North Bergen (NB) 64, Hackensack (H) 63, Ramapo (Rpo) 59, Paramus (P) 58, Westwood (WW) 57, Northern Highlands (NH) 56, River Dell (RD) 54, Pascaack Hills (PH) 52, Pascaack Valley (PV) 48, Northern Valley/Old Tappan (OT) 46, NV/Demarest (Dem) 42, Ramsey (Rmy) 39, Wood-Ridge (WR) 34, Rutherford (R) 33.5, Tenafly (Ten) 32, Bergen Catholic (BC) 30, Emerson/Park Ridge (EPR) 29.5, Cliffside Park (CP) 28, St. Joseph (SJR) 28, Bergen Tech (BT) 26, Paramus Catholic (PC) 23, Mahwah (Mah) 20, Saddle Brook (SB) 20, Teaneck (Tea) 18, St. Mary's (SM) 19, Bogota (Bog) 16, Fair Lawn (FL) 16, Cresskill (C) 11, Waidwick (W) 10, Becton (Bec) 8, Bergenfield (Bgf) 6, Elmwood Park (EP) 5, Indian Hills (IH) 0.

Championships

93 — Dan Uffleman (PH) pin Tyshawn Hines (H), 1:17; 103 — Kevin Hanson (Rmy), pin Chris Galdi (Rpo), 3:41; 112 — Mike Incognito (WR), dec. Christian Stueben, (NH), 13-8; 119 — Jon Murry (RP), pin Lier Zamir (FL), 0:21; 125 — Kevin Moran (P), pin Kevin Hogan (DBP), 1:36; 130 — Cyle Nadzan (Rpo), dec. Ben Davidson, (Mah), 6-3; 135 — Ricky Jones (WW), dec. Frank Toscano (PH), 11-9; 140 — Turget Guersel (CP) dec. Tony Gershowitz (RP), 11-9; 145 — Walter Kumka (PV), pin Sal Arrigo (RP), 1:30; 152 — Ryan Arcadia (NH), pin Dave West (OT), 1:17; 160 — Vaughn Dubow (OT), pin Joe Campasano (NB), 2:21; 171 — Rich Vitale (RD), pin James Layman (BC), 0:19; 189 — Jean Beljour (H), pin R.J. Cummins (PV), 0:59; 215 — Eric Sherman (Tena), pin Aryan Douglas (DBP), 2:17; 275 — Rob Kerdstat (SJR), pin Peter Fernandez (Bog), 1:38.

MOST OUTSTANDING WRESTLER

Dan Uffleman, Pascaack Hills

Fri Dec 29, 2000

Hasbrouck Hgts.' Horner earns tourney's top honor

By **RON FOX**

Staff Writer

PARAMUS — To indicate what the 189-pound championship bout meant to the crowd Friday, when time was stopped for blood with the score fully in Morgan Horner's favor, about 20 percent of the attendance seemed to head for the parking lot.

The showdown between State medalists at the Bergen County Coaches Association Holiday Wrestling Tournament was no contest, a 13-3 triumph by the Hasbrouck Heights senior over Garfield's Ar-dian Ramadani. Horner is 93-14 for his career.

Horner, who had edged Ramadani by two points in overtime in their two previous meetings, charged into the title bout and notched a takedown just five seconds into it, going from a single-leg to double-leg takedown.

Horner's win was so spectacular, he was awarded the Most Outstanding Wrestler trophy on a day when Hackensack's Chris Bitetto became only the third wrestler to win Bergen County championships all four of his high school years.

"I don't mean to sound cocky, but I wasn't surprised I got it," said Horner, who recorded four takedowns in the opening period. "My coach [Mike Sculla] kept

me informed all the while and he said that whoever won this match would get Outstanding Wrestler."

The fact Horner won the Most Pins in the Quickest Time award (four in 4:09) didn't hurt his chances either.

"He [Ramadani] almost took me down in overtime both times we met before, so my goal was to beat him by a lot," Horner said. "I wanted to prove to people that it wasn't just luck."

Bitetto said he wasn't depressed about not being chosen for the MOW. "To tell you the truth, I just wanted to win the fourth one. It was special to me because of a close friend, Mike Palo of St. Joseph," he said, fully aware that Palo would have been going for a fourth championship, too, if not for injuries suffered when his car was rear-ended four weeks earlier. "I made him a part of this by putting his name on my headgear. I know he wanted this more than anything."

There were a host of standouts on hand, such as six repeat champions, including returning State champion Mike Massenzio of St. Joseph, Wood-Ridge's Mike Marotta, Indian Hills' Ricky Laforge, Bergen Catholic's James Weck, and Bitetto and Horner.

The 171-pound Massenzio, who recorded his 100th career victory Thursday,

built his mark to 102-15 by pinning Emerson/Park Ridge's Nick Calandrino in 1:19 with a far-arm and leg lock. He had four first-period pins totaling 4 minutes 55 seconds. Laforge pinned four opponents in 5:07, capping the day with a 1:49 fall in the 125-pound final over second-seeded Ron Palmieri of North Bergen by locking in legs coming off a 2-on-1 tilt.

Bergen Catholic repeated as team champion with 165 points to 133 for runner-up Indian Hills. The Crusaders already had a strong lead before freshman Bryan Nunziato opened the title round with a 32-second pin.

Dumont's Anthony Dunkin, Lyndhurst's Dennis McSweeney, Lodi's Jerry Rinaldi, and Indian Hills' Matt Shaban and Steve Becker, Fair Lawn's Eddie Guy, and Garfield's Luis Castillo also were crowned champions. Team group champions were Bergen Catholic (Group 4), Indian Hills (Group 3), Pascack Hills (Group 2), and Emerson/Park Ridge (Group 1).

The only returning champion who did not repeat was Pascack Valley's Steve Hult, who built a 7-1 lead only to fall to former junior-level teammate Mark Romeo of Ridgewood, 15-7, in Friday's semifinals. Romeo then lost to Weck — last year's Most Outstanding Wrestler — in the 130 final.

ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

A growing reputation

By J.P. PELZMAN
Staff Writer

Morgan Horner was a senior at Hasbrouck Heights before he decided to go out for the football team.

"All of my friends play football," he explained, "and the coaches talked me into it. I figured it would be fun."

Oh, and there was one other reason. "I was getting a little too big for cross-country," Horner said.

That's because the four-year varsity wrestler has gone from a 125-pounder as a freshman to a 189-pounder as a senior. But as his weight has increased, so have Horner's skills. He won the 189-pound weight class Friday at the Bergen County Coaches Association Holiday Wrestling Tournament.

In the final, Horner defeated Ardian Ramadani of Garfield, 16-3, after defeating him 8-6 in overtime in the Garfield Tournament two weeks earlier. "We're probably going to see each other again in the States," said Horner, The Record's Bergen County Athlete of the Week.

Horner couldn't explain the lopsided victory, especially after the taut battle earlier this month. "I just felt like going out there and wrestling," he said.

"It was a huge win for his confidence," Hasbrouck Heights coach Mike Sculla said, "to beat Ardian in such a convincing fashion. Morgan was on that night, that's for sure. It's the best I've

seen him wrestle."

The seventh-year coach would know. He's obviously seen Horner wrestle on many occasions and has seen him grow from a 5-foot 4-inch, 125-pound freshman to a 6-0, 189-pound senior. But Sculla knew that Horner's 125-pound frame "wasn't lasting very long."

That's because Horner comes from a "big" family. His mother, Brigit, is six-foot; his father, Andrew, is 6-4; and his sister, Erin, is 6-0 and was a former girls basketball standout for the Aviators. She is now playing for Stevens Tech.

Horner took up wrestling when he was 8, starting at Mat Time, a wrestling club in Lodi.

"I've just always loved to wrestle," he said. He credits several coaches in influencing his development. Nick DiDomenico, who is also the Lodi High School coach, and Frank Torres both worked with him at Mat Time. Sculla and assistant Joe Bitetto have instructed him at Hasbrouck Heights.

Sculla noted that Horner's gradual weight gain has helped him as a wrestler. "A lot of wrestlers his size get by on brute strength," Sculla said, "but he wrestles as well as any 103-pounder. He's got good technique and a lot of moves that the upper weights generally don't see."

Horner finished seventh in the State tournament last year in the 171-pound weight class, so his ultimate goal this season is quite obvious. "I would like to become State champion," he said, "but the only way to do that is to just go out and wrestle. I just have to stay motivated."

Horner said he has just begun applying to colleges. His preference is to attend a college in New Jersey or Pennsylvania, but that he'd also like to wrestle at the Division I level if the opportunity is there. He is undecided about what to study, but is considering computer science, physical therapy, and sports medicine.

Runners-up for Athlete of the Week are: basketball players **Matt Henry** of Cresskill, **Katie Kleinert** of Ramapo, **Adrienne Lampe** of Dumont, and **Michelle Serrano** of Bergenfield.

SPORT: WRESTLING

WEIGHT: 189 pounds CLASS: Senior AGE: 17
LATEST ACCOMPLISHMENT

He defeated Ardian Ramadani of Garfield, 16-3, to win the 189-pound title at the Bergen County Coaches Association Holiday Wrestling Tournament on Friday.

BACKGROUND

He has been a varsity wrestler for all four years in high school. He ran cross-country for three years before switching to football for his senior season. He has also been on the outdoor track team for four years, specializing in the pole vault.

QUOTE

"What I like about wrestling is the fact that you get to combat with other people. It's almost like a street fight with rules and regulations."

