

2013

Will of a champion

Paramus' Trovato confident

By **BRIAN A. GIUFFRA**
STAFF WRITER

PARAMUS - Paramus junior Joe Trovato is a soft spoken, unassuming wrestler; the kind of competitor who wins a big match, gets his hand raised by the ref, then trots off the mat without celebrating or displaying a hint of bravado.

But that doesn't mean he's lacking confidence.

"I think I'm capable of winning a state championship this year," Trovato said. "I don't have to boast about it. I just have to come out, give it my all and wrestle up to my potential. If I do that, I think I could win just about anything I wrestle in."

That's not boasting. It's speaking the truth.

During the first two years of his high school career, Trovato has won two district titles, one county title, one region title and placed fifth in the state twice while compiling an 81-12 record.

He opened this season with a gold medal at the Caldwell tour-

BCCA George Jockish Holiday Wrestling Tournament

Where: Rockland Community College, 145 College Road, Suffern, N.Y.

SCHEDULE

Today: First round, second round, pre-quarterfinals, 11 a.m. Quarterfinals, consolation Round 1, consolation Round 2, 4:30 p.m.

Sunday: Semifinals, consolation Round 3, consolation round semifinals, 10:30 a.m. Consolation finals (third, fifth, seventh places), 2:30 p.m. Finals, 4:30 p.m.

Admission (all-day pass): Adults, \$10, students \$6.

DIRECTIONS

Via Garden State Parkway and Palisades Interstate Parkway: Travel north, to the New York State Thruway north (Albany). Take exit 14B (Airmont). Turn right on Airmont Road, which becomes Highview Road. Turn left at fourth stop light, onto College Road. Follow College Road and turn left into main entrance.

Via Route 17: Travel north to the New York State Thruway south (New York City). Take Exit 14B (Airmont). Turn left on Airmont Road. Follow directions as above.

namement, where he pinned his way to the top of the 138-pound bracket, but enters today's BCCA George Jockish Holiday tournament as an overlooked star because of his reserved demeanor and often deliberate wrestling style.

"He doesn't brag, but he's right there with the best kids in the state," Paramus coach Steve Klass said. "Joe knows if he's at his best, he can beat anybody."

Trovato proved that at the state tournament the last two years, advancing to the quarterfinals twice before suffering one-point defeats to the eventual state finalist, including last year when he lost, 2-1, to two-time state champion Brenden Calas of Seton Hall Prep.

That loss was an eye-opener for Trovato, who was leading, 1-0, until Calas reversed him with 25 seconds left. It not only

proved he could compete with anyone, it also motivated him during the off-season, when he added muscle to his physique and made the big jump from 120 to 138.

"He's not a skinny little kid anymore," Klass said. "He's a big young man."

"Mentality and physically I'm a lot stronger," Trovato added. "That raises my confidence when I step on the mat because I know I'm just as good as anybody I wrestle."

Trovato isn't the only Spartan with high hopes heading into the BCCA tournament. Freshman Kyle Cochran (126) and senior Nick Bucci (182) won gold medals at the Caldwell tournament, and sophomores Nick Pettineo (106) and Alex Sebahie (132) and senior Justin Cochran (145) were runners-up.

The Spartans placed second as a team behind state-power Kittatinny and ahead of state-ranked Hunterdon Central and hope to be among the top three in the county tournament, too.

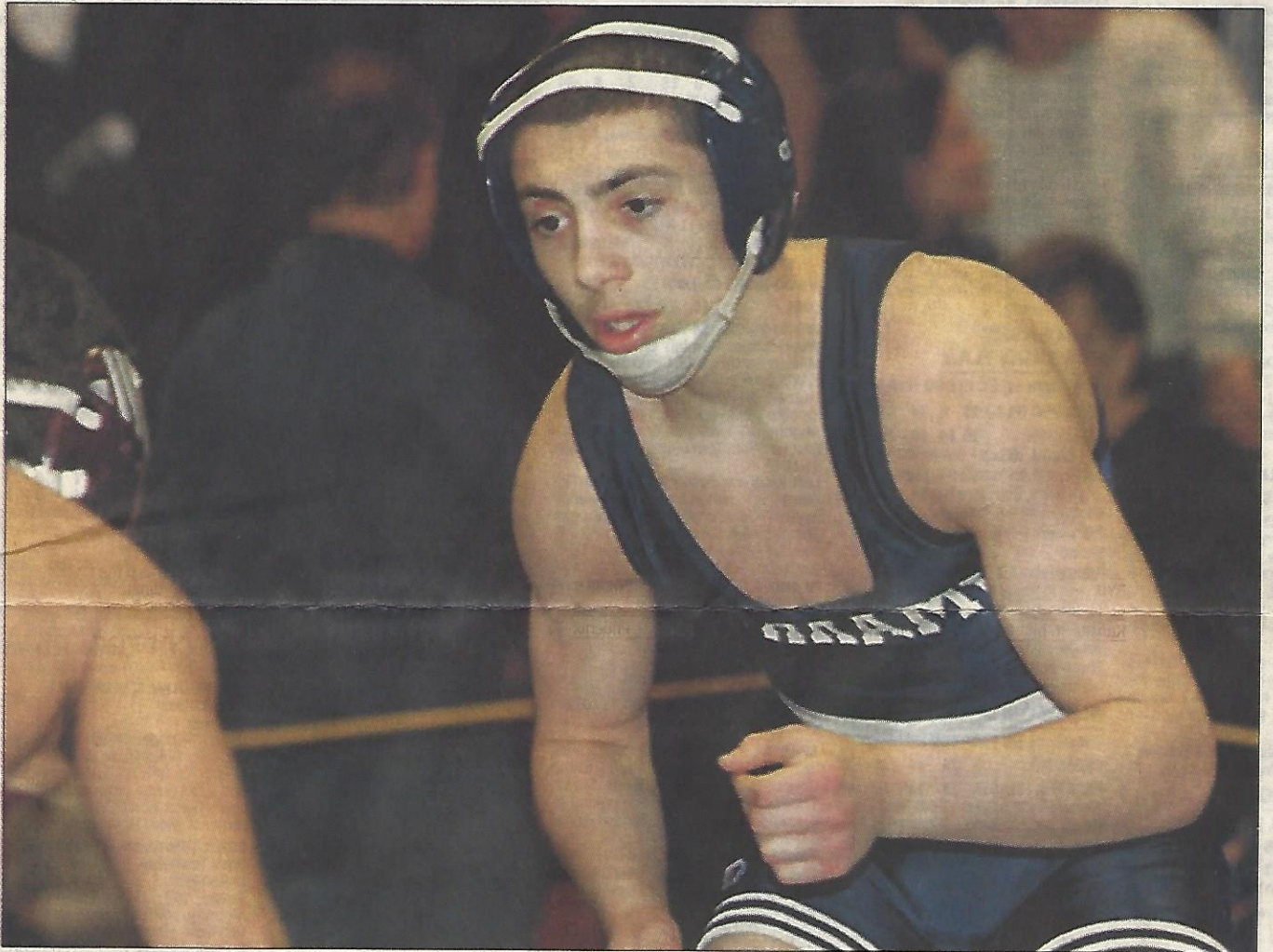
"We're a pretty young team," Trovato said. "But I think we're right there with all the top public schools."

Which is about as much boasting as Trovato is ever going to do.

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2013

WRESTLING



FILE PHOTO BY JAMES CLARKE/SPECIAL TO THE RECORD
Joe Trovato (81-12) has won two district titles, one county title, one region title and placed fifth in the state twice.

Dec 30, 2013

BCCA GEORGE JOCKISH HOLIDAY WRESTLING TOURNAMENT

Bit of Bergen bliss

Rubinetti stuns two defending champs



MITSU YASUKAWA/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Demarest junior Anthony Rubinetti working a wrist underneath on Don Bosco standout Luis Gonzalez.

Dec 30, 2013

By **GREGORY SCHUTTA**
STAFF WRITER

SUFFERN, N.Y. - Anthony Rubinetti had to delay his celebration for a few seconds.

His first attempt to leap into the arms of coach Mike DiPiano was thwarted because the referee still had his arm raised to acknowledge his stunning 7-4 victory over returning state champion Luis Gonzalez of Don Bosco.

But when the official let go, the junior from Demarest let loose.

Rubinetti countered Gonzalez's attempt at a winning takedown with seven seconds remaining to clinch the 120-pound title at the BCCA George Jockish Holiday Wrestling Tournament and cap a monumental weekend with the Most Outstanding Wrestler award.

"I'm speechless," said Rubinetti, who also beat Bergen Catholic's Tyler Casamenti in the semifinals to give him back-to-back wins over returning Holiday tournament champs.

"To beat two studs like that back to back. It's the most amazing thing that has ever happened to me in this sport."

Rubinetti's win threw a little bit of water on a historic tournament as seniors Anthony Giraldo of North Bergen and Johnny Sebastian of Bergen Catholic became just the seventh and eighth wrestlers in the

event's 54-year history to win four titles. Gonzalez failed to make it three this year.

Bergen Catholic ran away with its second straight team title and record 17th overall with 331.5 points, obliterating its record of 254.5 set last season. The Crusaders sent 11 wrestlers to the finals and came away with five champs.

But it was Rubinetti who shined above all others when he took on Gonzalez in the second-to-last bout of the tournament.

The score was tied at 4 with about 1:15 left in the third period when Gonzalez let up Rubinetti, falling behind by a point in the process, in an effort to go for the winning takedown.

"He's a returning state champion, but I had to think of him as just another wrestler," Rubinetti said.

"We hand fight in the room every day at the beginning of practice and at the end," DiPiano said. "We want to make it uncomfortable for you."

Gonzalez certainly was uncomfortable as he couldn't get in a shot against Rubinetti's defense. Then with 10 seconds left, the Bosco senior went for a desperation shot and Rubinetti spun around for the clinching takedown and a roar from the crowd at Rockland Community College.

"It was nuts," Rubinetti said. "My dad is going crazy. I can't be happier."

Giraldo and Sebastian, both returning champions, had big smiles on their faces as

they accepted their plaques as four-time champs. But this is just the beginning as they embark on a bigger goal in Atlantic City.

"I accomplished a goal that I had since my freshman year," Giraldo said. "Last week, I won the Beast of the East tournament. Now this. I just have to stay focused and keep on wrestling hard because I know it's going to be harder to stay on top."

Giraldo had two pins and a major decision in his first three bouts at 132 before cruising to a 9-3 victory over Bergen Catholic's J.P. Ascolese in the final.

Sebastian, who is gunning for his third straight state title, threw a curve into the tournament when he bumped up to 195 and posted two pins and a technical fall in his first three bouts as the top seed.

But he didn't get the chance to wrestle for his fourth title, instead winning by forfeit when returning Holiday champ Dominic Carfagno of St. Joseph dropped out with a knee injury.

"It means a lot especially coming from the school that I wrestle at," said Sebastian, who joins Jason Hernandez and Bryan Nunziato as four-time champs for the Crusaders.

"To be part of an elite group at Bergen Catholic, it's just another aiming point for the team to go for now."

Heady move by Lombardi

Dec 30
2013

Bosco junior pins at 182

By **BRIAN A. GIUFFRA**
STAFF WRITER

SUFFERN, N.Y. — Don Bosco junior Jeff Lombardi sat on the mat for a second with his mouth wide open, a look of shock and excitement slowly coming over his face as he started to get to his feet.

Lombardi wasn't completely sure how he stunned his opponent and the crowd at the BCCA George Jockish Holiday Wrestling Tournament finals Sunday. But he was sure he was a champion and that's all that mattered.

Trailing Bergen Catholic sophomore Daniel DeLorenzi, 5-1, heading into the third period, Lombardi reversed DeLorenzi from the down position and stuck him to his back

WRESTLING

with a headlock for a stunning pin at 4:44 of the 182-pound final.

"I didn't know what was going on when I hit the move," Lombardi said. "I was trying to wear him down and use my speed to get the angles. When I got the headlock, I squeezed it in and saw the ref counting back points, so I just tried to hold him there."

He did more than that, sending the crowd into an uproar as he celebrated the biggest win of his career by letting out a primal roar.

It was a moment that seemed to surprise Lombardi, a Washingtonville, N.Y., resident.

He came into the tournament giving up 10 pounds or more to most of his opponents (he weighed in at 169 Sunday) and had a limited résumé that featured third-place finishes at the BCCA and district tournaments last season.

But Lombardi eclipsed everything he accomplished before by slipping out of DeLorenzi's grip early in the third before pulling in the headlock.

"[When I was down] I kept saying to myself, 'There's still hope; there's still a chance; there's still a miracle there,'" Lombardi said. "This means a lot, especially for me winning my first county title."

It wasn't Kevin Wilkens' first title, but it was his hardest.

The St. Joseph senior and defending heavyweight champion was trailing upset-minded Connor O'Brien of Bergen Catholic, 2-1, with the clock ticking down on their 285-pound final. But Wilkens managed to get hold of O'Brien's leg before pulling him down to the mat for the winning takedown with just two seconds left.

The football star and Rutgers recruit cruised to the title last season and pinned in the finals. This year, he had to shake off nerves.

"I knew I was supposed to beat him, but when I got to the finals my jitters got to me," Wilkens said. "Sometimes a different Kevin Wilkens comes to wrestle."

"But being only two weeks out of football season, I thought this was pretty good."

And plenty memorable.

Dec 30, 2013

North Jersey's juggernaut

SUFFERN, N.Y. – Bergen Catholic and North Jersey wrestling have never been better.

The Crusaders completed a dominating performance Sunday at the BCCA George Jockish Holiday Wrestling Tournament with a staggering 11 finalists, five champions and a tournament record 331.5 points.



DARREN COOPER

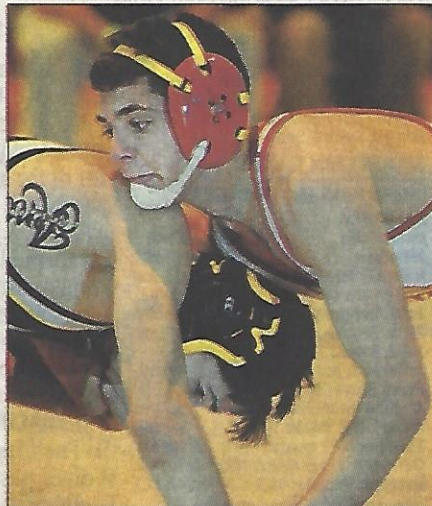
LOCAL SPORTS COLUMNIST

“You could take half of their team, put them in another tournament, and they [could] win both,” Ridgefield Park coach Tony Gonzalez said.

Coming off a strong performance at the Beast of the East tournament in Delaware, where they finished second, the Crusaders showed over the last two days that they're deeper and better than the rest.

“I think this is a prelude to the state tournament,” Gonzalez said. “You will see a lot of these kids in the semifinals and finals in Atlantic City.”

We are in the midst of a North Jersey takeover of Garden State wrestling. Last



MITSU YASUKAWA/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Double-overtime winner Pete Lipari of BC, right, angling for leverage.

year, North Jersey produced a record six state champions and had eight finalists. Only two of those eight graduated. In 2012, there were two North Jersey state champions, none in 2011, and one in 2010. You see the trend.

“This group is so top of the line,” New Jersey wrestling historian Lou Lazzari said. “Right now it's at its apex, and we're hoping it stays at this level.”

There are many reasons for North Jersey's big step forward on the mat, but there's no doubt which team is carrying the banner: Bergen Catholic.

The Crusaders have always been a power in this area, but in the last three years they've become national players. They are ranked No. 7 in the country by InterMat, and are clearly No. 1 in New Jersey.

Crusaders coach Dave Bell cites the leadership of senior Johnny Sebastian, who won his fourth BCCA title Sunday, as a key factor.

“Over the years, we have attracted our fair share of good athletes,” Bell said. “When you bring in a Johnny Sebastian, he's a leader, and his qualities, his work ethic [make everyone better]. Bringing in a Nick Suriano, his work ethic, his intensity. Both of them have brought up the level of the room. Our guys can always find someone that can push them.”

Suriano, a sophomore, remains one of

the top-ranked lightweights in the country, and he cruised to his second straight BCCA title. He's the centerpiece of Bergen Catholic's future.

The Crusaders' next big challenge comes this weekend in Minnesota, where they will compete in “The Clash,” a dual-match tournament.

“It's considered to be arguably the best dual-meet tournament in the country,” Bell said.

The reasons North Jersey wrestlers have improved are numerous. You can refer to the single-sport specialization trend. You can talk about the good coaching.

“Sometimes a coach would just be collecting a check and not care,” Lazzari said. “Now they're seeking competition, and the way the seeding process works [for the state finals], you have to face good competition, so you're wrestling better people.”

There also are booming feeder programs in many North Jersey towns, and seemingly a wrestling club on every corner.

Some of these clubs aren't glamorous. It could be just a room in a warehouse with a water fountain, but kids show up with headgear, wrestling shoes and desire. And they can't help but get better if they try.

“The one thing people always leave out is passion,” Gonzalez said. “When you're passionate about something, you'll be successful.”

Right now, the non-public schools are reaping the rewards. There were only three public-school individual winners Sunday, the fewest in the tournament's 54-year history. It will be interesting to see if that trend continues.

Bell said he wishes the New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association would relax its rule that 70 percent of a school's competition must be within New Jersey. He said he could fill out a grueling schedule for the Crusaders without much trouble.

Or he could take Gonzalez's advice: split his team into two and see how far each one can go.

Dec 30, 2013

BCCA GEORGE JOCKISH HOLIDAY WRESTLING TOURNAMENT

AT ROCKLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE

TEAM SCORES

1. Bergen Catholic (BC) 331.5; 2. Don Bosco (DB) 181; 3. St. Joseph (StJ) 166.5; 4. Northern Highlands (NH) 113.5; 5. Paramus (P) 108; 6. River Dell (RD) 97.5; 7. Becton/Wallington (BEC) 96; 8. Ridgewood (RW) 93.5; 9. Hackensack (HA) 92.5; 10. North Bergen (NB) 88.5; 11. Glen Rock/Saddle Brook (GS) 75; 12. Demarst (DEM) 70.5; 13. Emerson/Park Ridge (EPR) 69; 14. Old Tappan (OT) 55; 15. Pascack Hills (PH) 48; 16. Lodi (LO) 47; 17. Rutherford (RU) 46; Tie 18. Pascack Valley (PV) 41, Ramsey (RSY), Ridgfield Park (RP) and New Milford (NM) 41; 22. Fort Lee (FL) 40; 23. Westwood (WW) 39.5; 24. Hasbrouck Hts./Wood-Ridge (HW) 39; 25. Paramus Catholic (PC) 38; 26. Fair Lawn (FLN) 37; 27. Dumont (DU) 25.5; 28. Bogota/Weehawken (BOG) 25; 29. Bergenfield (BF) 24; 30. Waldwick/Midland Park (WMP) 22; 31. Ramapo (RPO) 21; Tie 32. Cresskill (CK) and Elmwood Park (EP) 17; 34. Lyndhurst/North Arlington (LNA) 16; 35. St. Mary (StM) 12; Tie 36. Cliffside Park (CP) and Mahwah 10; 38. Teaneck (TEA) 7; Tie 39. Garfield (GF) and Indian Hills (IH) 5.

SEMIFINALS

106 - Ian Tolotti (DU) dec. Evan Quinn (BC), 5-2; Jonathan Tropea (StJ) dec. Paco Robles (EPR), 4-3.
113 - Nick Suriano (BC) maj. dec. Avery Shay (DB), 10-2; Sam Schneider (EPR) maj. dec. Dakota Jones (RD), 14-4.
120 - Luis Gonzalez (DB) tech. fall Jonathan Cruz (LO), 17-2, 5:43; Anthony Rubineti (DEM) dec. Tyler Casamenti (BC), 4-1.
126 - Pete Lipari (BC) dec. Taylor Shay (HA), 6-4; Mike Andreano (GS) dec. Marc Mastropietro (HW), 5-3 (ot).
132 - Anthony Giraldo (NB) maj. dec. Alex Sebahie (P), 10-2; J.P. Ascolese (BC) dec. D.J. Tirelli (RD), 6-4.
138 - Jarred Rose (FLN) pin Danny White (PV), 5:34; Joe Trovato (P) maj. dec. Dan Dalcortivo (StJ), 10-1.
145 - Matt Zovistoski (StJ) dec. Alex Moore (PV), 3-0; Troy Schaafsma (BC) dec. Manny Dominguez (NB), 12-9.
152 - Joe Grello (BC) by inj. def. Sean Kelly (NH); Tyler Mullen (OT) dec. Tyler Loughlin (BEC), 3-2.
160 - Jordan Pagano (BC) pin Chris Jacobson (GS), 1:08; Cenzo Cariddi (RD) dec. Roy Forsys (BEC), 4-3.
170 - Luke Farinano (DB) pin James Lane (HA), 1:55; Kevin Mulligan (BC) dec. Nathan Bueno (P), 3-2.
182 - Dan DeLorenzi (BC) dec. Brandon Latierno (NH), 10-7; Jeff Lombardi (DB) pin Nick Bucci (P), 2:33.
195 - Johnny Sebastian (BC) pin Mauro Altamura (HW), 2:59; Dominic Cariagno (StJ) dec. Zach Hunko (GS), 10-4.
220 - Zack Chakonis (DB) pin Goran Krasic (HA), 1:25; Christian Jenco (BC) dec. Anthony Iocco (DEM), 6-3.
285 - Kevin Wilkins (StJ) dec. Zac Suarez (NM), 9-6; Connor O'Brien (BC) dec. Sal Corales (FL), 7-3.

SEVENTH PLACE

106 - Andrew Hurdman (DEM) maj. dec. John Burger (NM), 13-2.
113 - Owen Woods (PC) dec. Matt Caban (LO), 5-0.
120 - Danny Ortega (NB) maj. dec. Garrett Norcross (RP), 14-4.
126 - Dorn Salvatore (LO) dec. Wilfredo Gil (RPO), 3-2.
132 - Chris Ambrogio (StJ) dec. Michael Foca (HA), 3-0.
138 - Steven Reyes (NB) dec. Anthony Tsikitikos (BF), 11-5.

145 - Anthony Aiello (OT) by forfeit.
152 - Kareem Dixon (HA) by forfeit.
160 - Aaron Martinez (RW) dec. Nick Mazzeo (EPR), 3-2.
170 - Dennis Kolenovic (BOG) dec. Michael Carfagno (StJ), 8-4.
182 - Brandon Gallagher (WW) dec. Kyle Inlander (RW), 12-5.
195 - Andrew Moras (RW) dec. Robert Askew (M), 4-2.
220 - Sukmin Yoon (RW) dec. Joe Longobardi (RD), 5-4.
285 - Marcus Pantoja (PC) dec. Marc Castrillon (PH), 2-1.

FIFTH PLACE

106 - Quinn by forfeit
113 - Shay pin Jason Dalcortivo (StJ), 5:52.
120 - Brian DiGuilmi (EPR) pin Cruz, 2:57.
126 - Mohamed Abdelhamid (RU) dec. Kyle Cochran (P), 6-5.
132 - Shane Sosinsky (NH) dec. Nick Saglimbeni (RW), 7-4.
138 - Dalcortivo dec. White, 6-1.
145 - Dominguez dec. Moore, 6-5.
152 - Ahmed Abdelhamid (RU) dec. John Douma (RPO), 10-3.
160 - Mike Rodriguez (HA) dec. Dom Mainiero (StJ), 3-1.
170 - Austin Purritano (RW) dec. Christian Marrero (BF), 11-6.
182 - Jedh Downey (OT) dec. Seth Zuidema (WMP), 7-5.
195 - Tom Cosgriff (NH) dec. Nick Catalano (RSY), 2-1.
220 - Iocco by inj. def. Krasic
285 - Kevin Feder (DB) dec. Corales, 3-2.

THIRD PLACE

106 - Evan DeLuise (DB) dec. Phil Ruiz (BEC), 4-0.
113 - Eric Hicks (FL) dec. Jones, 8-3.
120 - Casamenti dec. Jared Ibelli (NH), 5-0.
126 - Mastropietro dec. Shay, 3-1.
132 - Sebahie dec. Tirelli, 4-0.
138 - Andrew Somple (NH) dec. Joey Rocca (EP), 8-3.
145 - Justin Cochran (P) dec. Stephen Gerdner (RW), 4-2.
152 - Loughlin by forfeit.
160 - Forsys dec. Jacobson, 7-5.
170 - Bueno dec. Lane, 8-4.
182 - Bucci dec. Latierno, 5-2.
195 - Altamura dec. Hunko, 4-3.
220 - Shaun Stanley (PH) maj. dec. Freddy Garcia (RP), 8-0.
285 - Suarez pin Nick Napoli (WW), 2:58.

FINALS

106 - Tropea maj. dec. Tolotti, 13-5.
113 - Suriano pin Schneider, 5:38.
120 - Rubineti dec. Gonzalez, 7-4.
126 - Lipari dec. Andreano, 3-1 (2ot)
132 - Giraldo dec. Ascolese, 9-3.
138 - Trovato pin Rose, 3:38.
145 - Zovistoski pin Schaafsma, 1:09.
152 - Grello pin Mullen, 5:00.
160 - Pagano pin Cariddi, 3:32.
170 - Farinano maj. dec. Mulligan, 8-0.
182 - Lombardi pin DeLorenzi, 4:44.
195 - Sebastian by forfeit.
220 - Chakonis dec. Jenco, 3-1.
285 - Wilkins dec. O'Brien, 3-2.