

Wed Dec 6, 2023

Wrestling: Lower-weights to watch during season

Sean Farrell

NorthJersey.com USA TODAY NETWORK – NEW JERSEY

With the start of **wrestling** season coming up next week, it's time to spotlight the top wrestlers in North Jersey.

The first part of our three-day series looks at the top lower-weights.

Jack Bergmann

Lakeland senior

The Naval Academy commit is one of the most heralded public-school wrestlers after zipping through the Passaic County tournament last year with three pins in under five minutes. He came one win short of a state medal.

Nathan Braun

Bergen Catholic sophomore

The Rockaway native turned some heads last season at 106 when he reached the state final as the 19th seed. A district and region champion, Braun enters his sophomore year with a 28-6 career record.

Adrian DeJesus

St. Joseph junior

The No. 1 team in North Jersey got even stronger with DeJesus coming on board at 132 pounds. He captured a state title as a freshman at St. Peter's Prep and

was third last year at DePaul.

Benjamin Marchetto

West Milford senior

Marchetto has been a catalyst for the Highlanders as a two-time county champion and 2022 state medalist. He led the program to a share of the division title last season as a 35-match winner.

Jon McGinty

St. Joseph sophomore

McGinty is planning to bump up to 113 after being the tablesetter in the state champions' lineup. The Ridgewood native won a Bergen County title as a freshman and wrestled well in his Atlantic City debut by placing fifth.

Christopher Nucifora

12/6/2023

Bergen Catholic senior

Nucifora will be one of the most experienced wrestlers for new coach Dom Santoli after capturing back-to-back district titles. The Bucknell recruit advanced to the state Blood Round in each of the last two seasons at 113.

Vincent Paino

St. Joseph junior

One of the unsung heroes for the Green Knights' last season, Paino helped give his team 10 state medalists and a record- eight county champions. He won 32 matches and took fifth down in Boardwalk Hall.

Dylan Ross

Paramus Catholic senior

The Duke commit has been a key cog for the Paladins during their rise to a state power. Ross took eighth in the state in back-to-back seasons at 113 and 120, respectively.

Devin Ryan

New Milford junior

Ryan is a two-time state qualifier who climbed onto the podium last year by taking sixth. It capped off a special season for the 113-pounder who took home Most Outstanding Wrestler honors at the Bergen County tournament.

Leeana Mercado

Lodi senior

Mercado became the fourth state champion in Lodi history and the first on the girls side after a major decision in last year's final at 107. A BCWCA champion, Mercado (19-1) made the Puerto Rican U20 team about two months after the high school season.

Paige Kirk

Ramsey senior

Kirk has been a fast learner on the mat after getting into the sport her sophomore year. She clinched a region title last winter, went on to place eighth in the state at 114 and landed a commitment to Oklahoma City.

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WRESTLING:

MIDDLEWEIGHTS TO WATCH THIS SEASON

Sean Farrell

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With the start of **wrestling** season coming up quickly, it's time to spotlight the top wrestlers in North Jersey. The second part of our three-day series looks at the top middleweights.

Donny Almeyda

St. Joseph junior

The latest member of the Almeyda **wrestling** dynasty will be hard to stop this year at 138. He returns to the mat as a state fourth and with two county titles to his name.

Zach Ballante

St. Joseph junior

Ballante has a new home and a new weight class after competing at Paramus Catholic for the last two seasons. He's expected to cut down to 150 after capturing a region title and placing sixth in the state last season.

Ryan Burton

St. Joseph junior

The Orange County native took a big step forward last season, pinning his way to a region title and placing third in Atlantic City. Now he's back to build on a 36-9 season and repeat as a Bergen County champion.

Joey Canova

Bergen Catholic sophomore

Canova got his high school career off on the right foot by winning a Bergen County title and finishing seventh in the state at 144 pounds. He was the only freshman above 138 to make the podium at Boardwalk Hall.

Frank DiBella

St. Joseph senior

The Virginia Tech commit is a twotime state medalist and one of the senior leaders in a young but supertalented lineup. His midseason return

from a torn right meniscus helped the Green Knights roll to their first state title in 25 years.

Ryan Ford

12/7/2023

Bergen Catholic senior

The Crusaders' 150-pounder is a threetime state medalist who was fourth last season and seventh as a sophomore. Next year, Ford will continue the long wrestling pipeline from Bergen Catholic to Rutgers.

Ryan Langenmayr

Lakeland junior

Langenmayr clinched his second straight Passaic County title last year at 126 while helping the Lancers finish second in the team race behind Clifton. He could be one to watch in Atlantic City this year after having his last trip shortened by a shoulder issue.

John Quinonez

Paramus Catholic senior

Quinonez is the reigning Bergen County champion at 150 pounds and part of a Paladin group that had a school-record eight state medalists last winter. He was sixth at the year-end championships.

Daniel Rella

Paramus Catholic senior

Rella has been a productive scorer throughout his career as a two-time state medalist and three-time qualifier. He placed fourth last year at 165 and wound up with silver at the Bergen County tournament.

Santino Rodriguez

Don Bosco sophomore

The East Hanover native proved to be one of the best rookies around while leading a program-changing class at Don Bosco. Rodriguez went 35-7 last year and picked up a region title and state sixth-place medal.

Kamila Castro

Ridgewood junior

Castro went on a meteoric rise last year at 152 after missing the state and county podium as a freshman. She captured a BCWCA title and became her school's first state finalist since 1965.

Kayla Franson

Paramus senior

12/7/2023

Franson showed great improvement last winter, placing fourth in the state at 138 a year after a winless trip to the region tournament. She was 12-6 overall.

Olivia Georges

DePaul sophomore

The Bloomingdale native sealed her place in history last season by becoming Passaic County's first state champion in girls **wrestling**. It was hardly beginner's luck for Georges, who started **wrestling** in second grade and won two rec state titles.

Emma Mees

Paramus junior

Mees comes into the season with plenty of big match experience as a two-time state qualifier. She went 14-4 last season, clinched a spot in the Bergen County finals, and finished strong with an ultimate tiebreak win in the state third-place match.

Dalia Tsyrlin

Fair Lawn junior

No Cutter this century has placed higher in the state tournament than Tsyrlin, who dominated her way to fifth at 132 pounds last year. She pinned seven of 10 opponents in the postseason, including two with her season on the line at regions.

Catherine Weigel

Rutherford senior

Weigel is coming off a breakout season when she took sixth in the state at 126 pounds. She became the first Bulldog to make the podium since 2017 and the first ever on the girls side.

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Fri Dec 8, 2023

WRESTLING:

UPPER-WEIGHTS TO WATCH THIS SEASON

Sean Farrell

NorthJersey.com USA TODAY NETWORK – NEW JERSEY

With the start of **wrestling** season coming up next week, it's time to spotlight the top wrestlers in North Jersey.

The final part of our three-day series looks at the top upper-weights.

Rocco Dellagatta

St. Joseph junior Dellagatta will take on a new challenge at heavyweight after capturing district and region titles last winter at 175. The returning state fourth has committed to wrestle at Cornell, where he'll re-unite with his brother, Michael.

Daniel Elyash

Paramus senior North Jersey is a heavyweight hotbed again this year with the Davidson commit back from a 40-win season. He carried on the Spartans' state medal streak by placing fifth a year ago.

Frankie Martino

Passaic Valley senior Martino is back at 190 pounds after winning a Passaic County title and reaching the State Round of 12. He finished 40-7 and wreaked havoc as a lineman for the Hornets' football team.

Nevin Mattessich

Don Bosco sophomore The Ironmen have re-emerged as a state power with a star-studded sophomore class featuring Mattessich. He was one of only four freshmen state qualifiers at 175 and wound up one win short of a medal.

Gavin McGill

Rutherford senior The Bulldogs' heavyweight came into last season under the radar and completed it with a trip to Atlantic City. McGill was 28-7 as a junior, took third in the region and advanced to the second round of state wrestlebacks.

Aidan Schlett

St. Joseph senior The North Carolina commit put together his best season last year by cruising to a 30-11 record and a Bergen County title. Schlett will be one of the favorites again at 215 after getting seventh in the state as a sophomore and sixth as a junior.

Benjamin Shue

Bergen Catholic junior After sitting behind a state finalist his rookie year, Shue seized his chance in the lineup last March by placing fourth in the state. On top of being a star heavyweight, the Carlstadt native is an All-American in the discus and shot put.

Eddie Terreri

Paramus Catholic senior The Carlstadt native is a returning region champion who finished eighth in the state last year in a loaded bracket at 175. Terreri racked up 34 wins along the way while propelling his team to the top of its district.

Pantaleo Varga

Bergen Catholic senior Varga has accomplished a lot over the last two years, reaching a county final as a sophomore and making his Atlantic City debut last year at 190. He finished with 29 wins on the season after going 3-2 at the state championships.

Xavier Williams

Paramus Catholic junior No, he is not only the star running back for the Paladins football team – the West Orange native showed it on the mat last year as a Sam Cali champion, a Bergen County finalist and state eighth.

Caroline Biegel

DePaul junior The Lakeland transfer decided to get into club **wrestling** at the end of her freshman season and it set the stage for a memorable run in 2023. Biegel made a name for herself at 235 by becoming the second state finalist in Lancers' history.

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WRESTLING: PRESEASON NORTH JERSEY TEAM RANKINGS

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NorthJersey.com USA TODAY NETWORK – NEW JERSEY

The top division in North Jersey wrestling is all over the top of the preseason rankings.

The Big North United accounts for the first four teams with St. Joseph at No.

1, Bergen Catholic at No. 2, Paramus Catholic at No. 3 and Don Bosco at No.

4.

Meanwhile, the two public schools leading the way are a pair of defending sectional champions in Passaic Tech and Old Tappan.

Here are the full rankings for teams in the Big North and NJIC.

Top 25 rankings

1 St.Joseph17-2

2 BergenCatholic13-4

3 ParamusCatholic14-4

4 DonBosco10-5

5 PassaicTech17-7

6 OldTappan16-5

7 Clifton21-4

8 Westwood15-8

9 PassaicValley20-5

10 West Milford 18-5

12/14/2023

11 Ridgewood 15-5

12 Emerson/Park Ridge 14-8

13 Pascack Valley 13-10

14 Pascack Hills 20-8

15 River Dell 12-13

16 Lakeland 13-10

17 Northern Highlands 14-8

18 Paramus 12-10

19 Hasbrouck Heights 20-5

20 New Milford 10-8

21 Wayne Hills 14-12

22 Butler 17-11

23 Ramapo 13-10

24 Pompton Lakes 19-8

25 Cliffside Park/Ridgefield 16-6 (*Records from last season.*)

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North Jersey team-by-team previews

HIGH SCHOOL WRESTLING

Sean Farrell

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Take a team-by-team look at wrestling teams from the Big North Conference and North Jersey Interscholastic Conference.

Big North American

Cliffside Park/Ridgefield (16-6): While the Red Raiders lost three scoring leaders to graduation, not much else has changed after the program's winningest season in over a decade. Junior Bryann Mejias and seniors David Alvarado and James Ramundo are three proven wrestlers who can set the tone.

Dumont (12-12): The Huskies will shoot for their third straight division title behind a trio of Bergen County medalists: sophomores Ryan McKenna (113) and Joseph Petriello (126) and senior Jeremy Quezada (150). Junior Matthew Mertz is another pillar for Dumont.

Fort Lee (4-13): The Bridgemen start a new era with Jonathan Melendez taking over the program. The former Montclair State coach will count on seniors Myles Beckerman and Gabriel Jimenez and junior Emilio Velazquez to build the foundation.

Big North Freedom

Northern Highlands (14-8): The Highlanders want to earn another trip to the state tournament and take advantage of what coach Dan Rechain called "an infusion of young talent". Senior state qualifier Ethan Mendel (215) will be the savvy veteran of that squad with support from Jake Gray, Justin Iannelli and Ryan Dyki.

Hackensack (3-23): Coach Charles Ferraro and the Comets will try to bounce back in his second year with a "strong junior class that is ready to take the next step". Senior Evan McGinnity and juniors Elioth Guarquila and GianLuca Mangano will be a big part of that equation.

Paramus (12-10): The Spartans will turn to senior state medalist Daniel Elyash at heavyweight to steer them in the right direction. Seniors William Banach, Daniel LaGrone and Chris Aykurt make up the supporting cast for a perennial contender.

Ramapo (13-10): The Raiders made history in coach Bill DiMauro's first season by sharing the league title and earning their first state tournament victory. Most of the lineup returns from that group, including Zak Darwish at 190 and district medalists Joey Fulco, Gino Gorga and CJ Anzaldo near the middle.

Ridgewood (16-5): The Maroons should be able to score in a number of ways after earning a share of the Freedom title last winter. There's plenty of talent in the lower to

middleweights with Bergen County medalist AJ Tretola, junior Charles Shaddow and seniors Ryan Sullivan and Yunte Trattner.

Big North Independence

12/17/2023

Fair Lawn (9-16): The Cutters will have some new faces after graduating three of their four region qualifiers from a big senior class. Junior Brody Bogues is the lone exception in that group and pairs up with Mark Calderio and Jayden Bonaccorso near the top.

Lakeland (13-10): The Lancers are shaping up to be a good tournament team after returning all three county champions: seniors Jack Bergmann and Sean Walker and junior Ryan Langenmayr. Junior Anthony Nyhuis will join them at 132 with a county silver on his mantle.

Passaic Valley (22-5): The Hornets are primed for a big season once again with seven wrestlers who won at least 20 matches a year ago. Senior Frankie Martino is the centerpiece as a county champion and re-unites with sophomore Will Capizzi and juniors Ayden Mulroony and Branden Rosario.

Wayne Hills (14-12): There's a lot to like about the Patriots who bring back state qualifier Sowzy Tsay at 132 and four straight district medalists near the bottom. Joseph Lucarello, Ashton Fava, Laith Ahmad and Adam Mashfej make up that supporting cast from 165 to 215.

Wayne Valley (12-10): Depth is expected to be a strength of the Indians after climbing back over .500 last season. Senior Nick Barone and junior Noah Zindaki can provide a dose of scoring as district medalists.

West Milford (18-5): The Independence co-champions will be solid up the middle with Nick Carbone and Passaic County champions Ben Marchetto and Colin Menier. Senior heavyweight and state qualifier Spencer Ribitzki helps the cause as well.

Big North Liberty

Clifton (21-4): The Mustangs have a strong core in place after winning the Passaic County title and reaching a sectional final last winter. Half the lineup is back, including senior Najati Salim and high-scoring juniors Nick Doktor, Joseph Geleta and Isaac Cazimovski.

Passaic (13-17): The Indians pulled off a wrestling revival last year by going from one win to 13. Senior Chris Morales and junior James Brown will now lead their chase for a .500 record.

Passaic Tech (17-7): The Bulldogs have assembled another deep roster after winning the North 1, Group 5 title in the first year under coach Eyad Abdelaziz. The wave of talent starts with Ismael Vertedor and county champions James Conklin and Omar Tareky.

Big North National

Bergenfield (10-21): The Bears will count on their skill in the middle to upper weights to guide a young team. It starts with county group champion Nathan Quinones at 165 and continues with seniors Calvin Acosta and Paul Mielke.

Demarest (10-16): The Norsemen are looking to be more competitive night in and night out with a lineup led by Kyle Davis at 113. Sophomore Alec Murado and junior Andrew Zwernemann will also spark a team with nine returning starters.

12/17/23

Old Tappan (16-5): The Golden Knights captured their first sectional title last season and don't appear to be slowing down after losing only two starters. The core of the team is its junior class led by brothers Nick and Jonathan Rotolo, Ryan Sullivan and Daniel Olivo.

Pascack Valley (13-10): A spike in turnout this year has boosted the outlook for a Panthers team that already returned nine starters. Four from that group clinched at least 20 victories a year ago: seniors Johnny Allmers and Antonio Cedeno, junior George Hamilton and sophomore Adan Cedeno.

Teaneck (7-18): The Highwaymen bring back two of their top three win leaders in senior AJ Ortiz and junior Jeremiah Harmit. Sending more wrestlers to regions and filling out the lineup are primary goals for coach Jim Nonas, who likes his team's attitude.

Tenafly (11-12): The Tigers are on the rise with a senior-heavy roster led by Jeremy Pitcock, who won a school-record 34 matches last year en route to becoming the team's first state qualifier in decades. Senior Peter Binikos and sophomores Guy Oelsner and Cole Mogensen return with good pedigrees.

Big North Patriot

Indian Hills (6-25): A big focus for the Braves is to fill out more weight classes and get more competitive in dual meets. They are bolstered by the addition of freshman Chris Rosamond and the return of Dylan Asgarian and Brady Dransfield as upperclassmen.

Mahwah (4-20): The Thunderbirds have some room to grow after graduating only two seniors. Sophomore Cole Boruta will be a cornerstone this year at 126 pounds.

Pascack Hills (20-8): The Broncos will aim for their third straight division title with Columbia commit Jake Wacha anchoring a good group of wrestlers toward the bottom. Fares Daraghme, Tyler Duffy and Quinn Mercier strengthen that end of the lineup even more.

Ramsey (12-14): The Rams have some quality wrestlers to build around with a pair of state qualifiers in Christian Fojon and Anthony Cadicina. Seniors Owen Delgado and Van Schoening will also push Ramsey in the right direction on the heels of winning seasons.

River Dell (13-14): The Golden Hawks expect to vie for league and sectional titles with most of the lineup back and the addition of 19 freshmen. Evan Krakower, Liam Boyle and RJ Weiss form a nice trio as 20-plus match winners.

Westwood (15-8): The Cardinals will be one of the top public schools in North Jersey with only two seniors to replace. Senior Anthony Lavezzola is back as a state qualifier, seniors Tommy Kousis and Gavin Seiler strengthen the middle and junior Aidan Dugan returns after getting a school-record 28 pins last season.

Big North United

Bergen Catholic (13-4): Coach Dom Santoli will kick off his first full season at the helm after replacing the legendary Dave Bell before last year's district tournament. State

medalists Nathan Braun, Ryan Ford, Benji Shue and Joey Canova all return to help the Crusaders reclaim the No. 1 ranking.

12/17/23

Don Bosco (10-5): The Ironmen re-emerged as a state power last year and now want to finish near the top after returning eight of their nine state qualifiers. The heart of the team is a brilliant sophomore class led by Santino Rodriguez in the middle and Nevin Mattessich, Dante DeLuca and Robert Ekins in the upperweights.

St. Joseph (17-2): The Non-Public A champions are loaded up again with seven returning state medalists and two more via transfer in Zach Ballante and Adrian DeJesus. Frank DiBella, Ryan Burton and Rocco Dellagatta add to a balanced lineup for a team that just finished No. 1 in the state.

Paramus Catholic (14-4): The Paladins will have one of the top lineups around with five returning state medalists and three transfers who made it down to Boardwalk Hall. Junior Xavier Williams was part of the contingent that made the podium in March along with seniors Dylan Ross, John Quinonez, Daniel Rella and Edward Terreri.

NJIC Colonial

Elmwood Park (8-15): The Crusaders may be young, but coach Tom Mulligan said they are “excited, driven and hungry” to take the rebuilding process to the next step after gaining some good experience. David Rojas and Gabe Alcocer will be the linchpins as upperclassmen and freshman Mohamed Makboul is a newcomer to watch.

Garfield (4-23): Coach Aaron Khan is hopeful that having better numbers and a productive offseason can get the program back on course. Senior Sean Lee will be a valuable asset at 120 and senior Jake DeMeester will be a huge lift at 126 after missing a year to injury.

Lodi (3-6): The Rams turn to a new coach in Jeff Rodriguez, who will count on the maturity of his senior class to mold a young group. Seniors Omar Asfour and Nick Castaneda and girls state champion Leeana Mercado have shown the ability to get the job done.

Rutherford (15-7): The Bulldogs will be a little inexperienced after winning the Colonial Division title, but still have some proven weapons. Senior heavyweight Gavin McGill is a state qualifier and joins a pair of district medalists in Joe Keeler and Jake Torre.

NJIC Liberty

Glen Rock (14-8): The Panthers will push for a division title and state tournament win with senior heavyweight Jake Rickett capping off a battle-tested roster. Their fate will also hinge on the work of sophomore Andrew Davidoff and juniors Eric Reznikov and Adrian Galvez.

Hawthorne (9-12): The Bears have the potential to go back over .500 with their experience and the addition of Don Bosco transfer Jack Lorper. Seniors Kaleb Ambrose, Cormac Smith and Antonio Sangama can rack up points as county medalists.

New Milford (10-8): The Knights are poised to build on a run to the conference final with all but two starters back. Juniors Devin and Jerzey Ryan are a dynamic duo at 120 and 132 and freshman Peter Psarianos has a bright future.

Pompton Lakes (19-8): The Cardinals are primed to be one of the top Group 1 programs thanks to their depth and continuity. Passaic County finalist Nicholas Laccitiello will be a key cog alongside Angelo Fusaro, Chris Ahlborn and Joseph Aungst.

12/17/23

Secaucus (17-13): The Patriots will fight for a spot in the state tournament with a big group of upperclassmen who've had time on the mat to develop. Santino Leon, Jake Orlando and CJ Krajewski all come back as juniors after eclipsing 20 wins a year ago.

NJIC Meadowlands

Butler (17-11): Coach Timothy Mickens comes over from Waldwick/Midland Park and inherits a program that's won six division titles in the last seven years. The talent level remains high starting with 30-match winners Jason Chrostowski, Logan Sykes and Luca Toriello.

Cresskill (18-9): The Cougars have to acclimate to a lot of roster turnover, but coach Nick Calandrino is encouraged by the numbers and hard work put forth by his squad. Senior Ron Presta will be a focal point at 157 and seniors Dean Suh and Josh Kim bring plenty of mat experience.

Hasbrouck Heights (20-5): The Aviators are expecting another deep run in the state tournament after back-to-back trips to the sectional final. The foundation is intact with the return of their four wins leaders: seniors Connor Sculla and Anthony Cummings, junior Kyle Von Seidelmann and sophomore Nico Nipitella.

Saddle Brook (14-11): The Falcons almost tripled their win total in Mike Getto's first season, but lost a lot of scoring to graduation. Senior captain Jonathan Curry and sophomores Dylan Cerciello and Jake Rigolosi will step up now for a young team.

St. Mary (1-16): The Gaels took their lumps after getting back into wrestling last season, but now have a framework to build on. Sophomore Anthony Moreno is the face of the program as a district champion and freshmen Mario Del Vecchio and Christian Stocker have shown potential.

NJIC Patriot

Becton/Wood-Ridge (14-11): Coach Kenneth Herishen takes over the program this year and likes his balance from top to bottom. Seniors Jordan Stallone and Brandon DiMase will pave the way for a team that's eager to get back in the state tournament.

Bogota/Ridgefield Park (17-7): The Scarlet Bucs have welcomed in a new coach in Jarred Tolotti, a 2018 Dumont graduate who wrestled at Springfield College. Keep an eye on junior Dean Sinisgalli at 132 as well as seniors Derek Martinez and Nick Buda.

Emerson/Park Ridge (14-8): The beat rolled on last year under new coach Joe Mazzeo, who led the Cavos to division and conference titles and a spot in the sectional final. His team will look to carry on the legacy again with a push from seniors Ryan Messick, Luke Macfie Jacob Shannon and Matthew Constante.

Leonia/Palisades Park (13-12): The Lions have the chance to be more competitive with Bergen Catholic transfers Seach and August Hibler coming on board at 132 and 144, respectively. Senior Stav Fronimos headlines the returning core as a county medalist.

Lyndhurst/North Arlington (10-18): The Golden Bears turned to one of their former wrestlers to lead the program by hiring Matt DeMarco, a 2016 Lyndhurst graduate. He will lean on Evan McNeil and Nate Boyd in the lower weights and Kieran McNeil and Kevin Silva in the middle.

12/17/23

Waldwick/Midland Park (2-24): The Warriors have grown the roster from 10 to 17 wrestlers under new coach Jean DuBois, a state medalist at Clifton back in 2013. Colin Fowler and Jake Abramson will be the go-to guys along with freshman Giovanni Giardina (120), a rec state finalist.

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Sunday, 12/17/2023 Page .S06

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Tues Dec 19, 2023

WRESTLING: 2023 BEAST OF THE EAST TOURNAMENT MEDALISTS

Nick Gantaifis

NorthJersey.com USA TODAY NETWORK – NEW JERSEY

Blair Academy regained the throne at the nation's premier high school wrestling tournament on Sunday.

After skipping the prestigious Beast of the East tournament last December, the storied program ascended back to the top of the podium to claim the team title at the 31st-annual Beast of the East at the University of Delaware's Bob Carpenter Center.

Paced by five champions and 11 total medalists, Blair finished with 282.5 points, ahead of runners-up Faith Christian Academy (190.5) and Malvern Prep (189.5). It marked the 26th title for the Bucs and their first since 2021, when they won their 21st in a row.

St. Joseph (Montvale) finished fourth in the team standings with 177 points. Junior Ryan Burton (175) won his first title just weeks after claiming the Super 32. The Green Knights were paced by seven medalists.

Delbarton, last year's team champion, finished in sixth place with 116.5 points. Sophomore Jayden James (138) captured his first title. New Jersey wrestlers earned 45 total medals. Twotime state champion Anthony Knox (126) of St. John Vianney repeated, and Harvey Ludington of Brick Memorial captured the 190-pound crown.

Here are the 112 wrestlers who reached the podium:

106 pounds

First place: Joe Bachmann, Faith Christian Academy **Second place:** Cameron Sontz, Delbarton **Third place:** Vincenzo Anello, Blair Academy **Fourth place:** McGettigan Liam, Gilman School **Fifth place:** Alex Diaz, Council Rock North **Sixth place:** Julian Rios, Phillips Academy **Seventh place:** Sam Wolford, Northern Lebanon **Eighth place:** Charles Esposito, St Joseph (Montvale) **113 pounds**

First place: Ayden Smith, Notre Dame **Second place:** JoJo Uhorchuk, Signal Mountain **Third place:** Gabriel Ballard, Northampton **Fourth place:** Nikos Filipos, Wyoming Seminary **Fifth place:** Jon McGinty, St Joseph (Montvale) **Sixth place:** Kole Davidheiser, Faith Christian Academy **Seventh place:** Anthony DiAndrea, Watchung Hills **Eighth place:** Michael Batista, Blair Academy **120 pounds**

First place: Leo DeLuca, Blair Academy **Second place:** Aaron Seidel, Northern Lebanon **Third place:** Landon Sidun, Norwin **Fourth place:** Keanu Dillard, Bethlehem Catholic **Fifth place:** Mason Jakob, Dobyns Bennett **Sixth place:** Mikey Batista, St Joseph (Montvale) **Seventh place:** Mason Ziegler, Quakertown **Eighth place:** Logan Brzozowski, Seton Hall Prep **126 pounds**

First place: Anthony Knox, St John Vianney **Second place:** Sammy Spaulding, Camden Catholic **Third place:** Sebastian Ortega, Howell **Fourth place:** Ryan DeGeorge, Delbarton **Fifth place:** Ethan Uhorchuk, Signal Mountain **Sixth place:** Evan Sanati, Brentsville **Seventh place:** Brian Melamud, Bergen Catholic **Eighth place:** Jackson Slotnick, Williamstown **132 pounds**

12/19/23

First place: Matthew Lopes, Blair Academy **Second place:** Caedyn Ricciardi, St Peter Prep **Third place:** Nick Oneill, Malvern Prep **Fourth place:** Carson Walsh, Pope John **Fifth place:** Gunner Andrick, Point Pleasant **Sixth place:** Jarvis Little, Summit **Seventh place:** Anthony Mutarelli, Council Rock South **Eighth place:** Xavier Ortega, Howell **138 pounds**

First place: Jayden James, Delbarton **Second place:** William Dekraker, Blair Academy **Third place:** Tahir Parkins, Nazareth **Fourth place:** Carter Nogle, Mount St Joes **Fifth place:** Anthony Lucchiani, Sherando **Sixth place:** Tyler Traves, Mountain View **Seventh place:** Jack Myers, Morristown **Eighth place:** Jake Zaltsman, St. John Vianney **144 pounds**

First place: Jack Consiglio, Malvern Prep **Second place:** Chase Van Hoven, Brooke Point **Third place:** Logan Rozynski, Blair Academy **Fourth place:** Sonny Amato, Rumson-Fair Haven **Fifth place:** Noah Nininger, Staunton River **Sixth place:** Tyson Sherlock, Gilman School **Seventh place:** Maddox Shaw, Thomas Jefferson **Eighth place:** Landon Desselle, Summit **150 pounds**

First place: Kollin Rath, Bethlehem Catholic **Second place:** Collin Gaj, Quakertown **Third place:** Chase Hontz, Faith Christian Academy **Fourth place:** Thomas Stofka, First Colonial **Fifth place:** Casper Stewart, Attica Batavia **Sixth place:** Jonathan Fuller, St Peter Prep **Seventh place:** Carson Main, Riverbend **Eighth place:** Gabe Logan, Delbarton **157 pounds**

First place: Paul Ognissanti, Blair Academy **Second place:** Charlie Scanlan, Bethlehem Catholic **Third place:** Ryan Ford, Bergen Catholic **Fourth place:** Nathan Rickards, Malvern Prep **Fifth place:** Kage Jones, Camden Catholic **Sixth place:** Bode Marlow, Thomas Jefferson **Seventh place:** Max Stein, Faith Christian Academy **Eighth place:** Benjamin Weader, Chantilly **165 pounds**

First place: William Henckel, Blair Academy **Second place:** Ryan Garvick, Central Dauphin **Third place:** Jordan Chapman, Cranford **Fourth place:** Emmitt Sherlock, Gilman School **Fifth place:** Kendrick Hodge, Somerset **Sixth place:** Nick Singer, Faith Christian Academy **Seventh place:** Noah Hall, Liberty Bealeton **Eighth place:** Dominic Sumpolec, Notre Dame **175 pounds**

First place: Ryan Burton, St Joseph (Montvale) **Second place:** Adam Waters, Faith Christian Academy **Third place:** Gage Wright, Parkersburg South **Fourth place:** Haden Bottiglieri, Belmont Hill **Fifth place:** Bekhruz Sadriddinov, Council Rock South **Sixth place:** Peter Snyder, Blair Academy **Seventh place:** Isael Perez, Northfield Mount Hermon **Eighth place:** Jake Stacey, Green Hill **190 pounds**

First place: Harvey Ludington, Brick Memorial **Second place:** Danny Rella, Paramus Catholic **Third place:** Nick Wehmeyer, Malvern Prep **Fourth place:** Landon Jobber-Spence, Staunton River **Fifth place:** Vincenzo LaValle, Hanover Park **Sixth place:** Kaleb

Jackson, St Joseph (Montvale) **Seventh place:** Pantaleo Varga, Bergen Catholic **Eighth place:** Cash Colbert, St. Paul VI Catholic **215 pounds**

12/19/23

First place: James Miller, Salesianum **Second place:** Hudson Skove, Rumson-Fair Haven
Third place: Brian Christie, St Joseph (Metuchen) **Fourth place:** Aidan Schlett, St Joseph (Montvale) **Fifth place:** Dylan Greenstein, Northfield Mount Hermon **Sixth place:** Stosh Zalota, Malvern Prep **Seventh place:** Jason Singer, Faith Christian Academy **Eighth place:** Charles Weidman, Xavier **285 pounds**

First place: Carter Neves, Blair Academy **Second place:** Sean Kinney, Nazareth **Third place:** Calvin Lachman, Quakertown **Fourth place:** Brett Clatterbaugh, Eastern View
Fifth place: Rocco Dellagatta, St Joseph (Montvale) **Sixth place:** Mark Effendian, Faith Christian Academy **Seventh place:** Ben Shue, Bergen Catholic **Eighth place:** James Bechter, Northfield Mount Hermon

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Paramus Catholic wrestler makes statement

Sean Farrell

NorthJersey.com USA TODAY NETWORK – NEW JERSEY

FLORHAM PARK – There was a time when Daniel Rella tossed out his wrestling shoes and felt ready to walk away.

Now the Paramus Catholic senior is tossing around his opponents with ease.

Rella rolled to the top on Thursday at the Sam Cali tournament with a dominant run at 190 pounds. His only match that went the distance in the two-day event came in the finals when he defeated Conor Delaney (Rumson-Fair Haven), 10-0, on the campus at FDU Madison.

Moving up two weight classes has not seemed to bother the Wood-Ridge native this season. He backed up his run to the Beast of the East final by not allowing an offensive point all tournament.

‘I’m pleased with it,’ said Rella, a two-time state medalist. ‘I still have to work on riding people out and grinding out gritty matches. The scoreboard may not

have been close but he’s a very solid wrestler. It’s a good opportunity to work hard late in the match and stay disciplined.’

Rella wound up as one of five finalists from North Jersey and two champions along with Lakeland’s Jack Bergmann at 113.

One of the turning points in Rella’s career came his sophomore year when he experienced all the highs and lows of the sport, including the challenge of cutting 20 pounds. His confidence spiked after beating a soon-to-be state finalist in the district tournament, but Rella came crashing down to Earth after losses in the state semis and consolations.

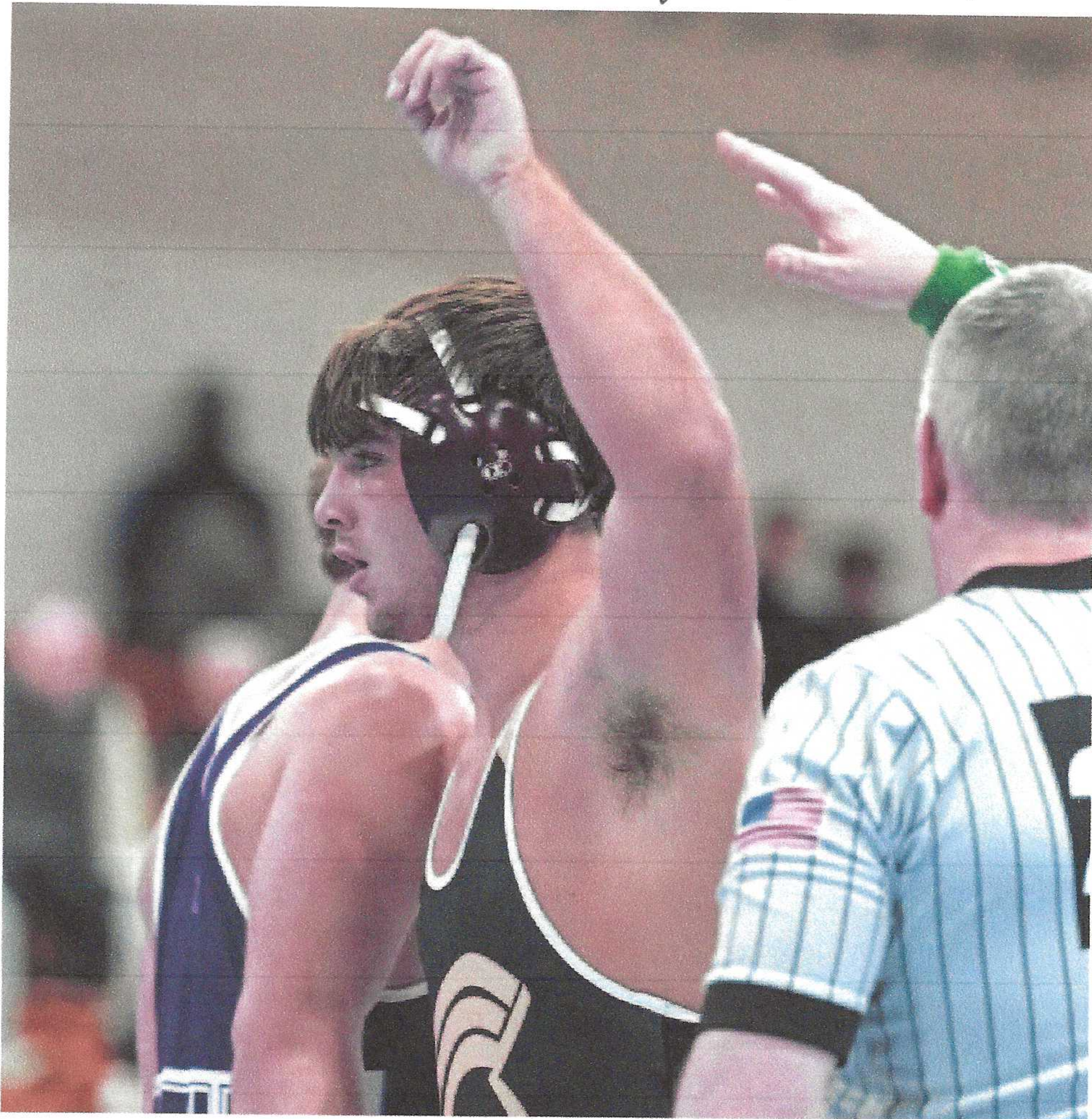
A wrestling lifer and the son of a state qualifier had reached his limit despite placing sixth.

It was not the ending he imagined after a season of running, elliptical work and sweats in the sauna.

‘The third day, making weight was tough,’ Rella said. ‘I got to the point where I could wrestle fully but my head wasn’t all the way there because it was a rough night. I ended up wrestling and that (consolation) loss hit me hard.’

‘I ran out of the building. I didn’t want to accept my medal. But (my coaches) knew I was going to be fine. It was disappointing, I’ve wrestled my whole life and if I don’t do it, it feels like a part of me is missing.’

12/30/2023



Rella credits his father, Dan, for shaping his mentality as a former wrestler himself and a regular at Paramus Catholic matches. The older Rella first got his son on the mat as a five-year-old.

12/30/2023

“Even after I lose, he’ll tell me that I can beat that kid next time,” the Paladins’ wrestler said. “You can beat anyone. It doesn’t matter what their ranking is or what they’ve done in the past. It’s about having a short-term memory.”

Rella is someone who prides himself on his ability to scramble and thrive in high-paced matches. Paladins assistant AJ Caprio describes him as someone who came into the program as a lowerweight and kept the same tactics even as he bulked up.

“I’m 42 and I’ve never seen a wrestler with his style,” Caprio said. “Every match he wants to score 10, 15, 20 points. He doesn’t want to win 1-0.”

That was the scene that played out Thursday on the center mat at Ferguson Recreation Center. Rella scored a takedown 31 seconds in and rode out Delaney the rest of the period.

The second period was more of the same for Rella: escape, takedown, three back points.

Now Rella and the Paladins are hoping the tournament can be the fuel to even bigger things.

“About a week (after his sophomore year), he said, all right I want to win that state title,” Caprio said. “Last year he went up to fourth and had a lot of matches with Ryan Burton that went back-and-forth. This year, he wants to come back and win it.”

Lakeland senior takes the crown Jack Bergmann will celebrate his title run with a new belt and a trip to the dentist Friday morning.

Bergmann knocked off Seton Hall Prep’s Anthony Pellegrino, 4-2, in the final at 113 pounds to win the wrestling-themed accessory that goes to all the winners.

But the victory did not come easy to Bergmann, who chipped a tooth during a shot in the semifinal and bloodied his right hand after being thrown midway through the final.

“It feels great (to win),” Bergmann said. “I didn’t wrestle my best in the final. I expect a lot more. But after the second period when I got slammed on my head, I was a little loopy. I was a little gassed out, but I held on.”

Bergmann is committed to wrestle at Navy, having come from a military family.

His uncle fought in the Vietnam War and grandfather was in the Navy infantry on the beaches of Normandy.

Bergmann had his hands full in the final, but still managed to win even without an offensive point. He took a 1-0 lead on an illegal throw call, doubled the lead on a stall and added escapes at the end of the second and third periods.

“This definitely gets us battle-tested early,” Bergmann said. “Last year a lot of us got down to AC and we were shellshocked by the environment.”

12/30/2023

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Saturday, 12/30/2023 Page .S01

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