

FIVE STORY LINES TO WATCH

Long road to finals will have lots of drama, fun

JJ CONRAD
STAFF WRITER

1. The top four finishers at Regions now advance to Atlantic City. Previously, the top three finishers in each weight class advanced to Boardwalk Hall for the state championships, which created dramatic third-place bouts. Now the drama will lie in the Region quarterfinals, with semifinal berths — and top four finishes and tickets to A.C. — on the line. The change will send an additional 112 wrestlers to Atlantic City this season, meaning that Friday night at Boardwalk Hall will now begin at 3 p.m. instead of 5 p.m.

2. How good will Bergen Catholic be this season? Expectations again are high for the perennial power, with the Crusaders beginning the year ranked as the No. 9 team in the country by USA Today in its Super 25 preseason poll. Last year's state champions Nick Suriano, Joe Grello and Kevin Mulligan have graduated, but Bergen Catholic still features two-time state champ Shane Griffith, Gerard Angelo, Carmen Ferrante, Josh McKenzie and Chris Foca to power The Record's preseason No. 1 squad. The Crusaders won't have any Bergen County Holiday Tournament champions this year, though, as coach Dave Bell confirmed Tuesday that Bergen Catholic will bypass this year's county tournament in favor of the Powerade Tournament in Pittsburgh on Dec. 28-29, the same two days as the Bergen Holiday.

3. How will the sweeping realignment of Districts and Regions play out? The NJSIAA revamped its District and Region tournaments, looking to balance the power and number of teams in the state's 32 districts. Seven of the eight Regions will now have 39 teams. Region 2 will have 38. The massive overhaul now has non-public schools Bergen Catholic (District 5, Region

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Story lines

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2), Don Bosco (District 3, Region 1), St. Joseph (District 4, Region 1), DePaul (District 7, Region 2), Delbarton (District 10, Region 3) and St. Peter's Prep (District 13, Region 4) scattered throughout six districts and four regions.

4. How will North Jersey's returning state champions fare? Bergen Catholic's Shane Griffith has already captured state titles at 132 and 138 in his first two high school seasons and is expected to bump up this year. He's listed at 152 by coach Dave Bell in the Crusaders' season preview. At 160 is Paramus'

Kyle Cochran, who caught fire late last year en route to capturing Paramus' first state wrestling title since 1982. He's expected to stay at that weight for major tournaments this year. DePaul's Brandon Kui is back after claiming last year's 182-pound title, and Don Bosco's Eric Chakonis returns after winning the 285-pound state title last March.

5. Who's got next? Talented freshmen could make immediate impact. Among the list of first-year grapplers who could make a name for themselves rather quickly are Fair Lawn's Dylan Cedeno, Bergen Catholic's Nick Kayal and Robert Howard, Don Bosco's Justin Bierdumfjel and Jordan Iannone, DePaul's Connor O'Neill, Clifton's Eddie Maldonado, Queen of Peace's Will Grater and Emerson/Park Ridge's Nick Babin and Logan Mazzeo.

ATHLETES TO WATCH

BC's Griffith back for more gold

JJ CONRAD
STAFF WRITER

Lower weights

Daniel Percelay, DePaul, junior: The Spartans' grappler took seventh in the state at 113 last season and has bumped up to 126 this winter on one of North Jersey's top teams.

Gerard Angelo, Bergen Catholic, junior: After claiming a state title his freshman year, Angelo took third in the state at 120 pounds last season. He is listed at 126 pounds to start this year.

Ray Wetzel, Queen of Peace, senior: Wetzel took eighth in the state last season at 120 pounds and has bumped up for the Golden Griffiths this season, expected to compete at 132.

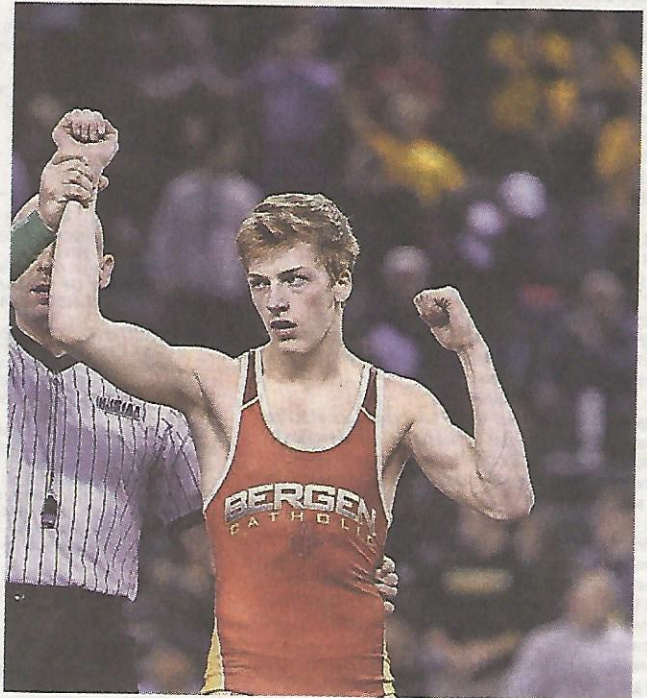
Middle weights

Shane Griffith, Bergen Catholic, junior: Griffith has captured two state titles in his first two years at 132 and 138, respectively, and the recent Stanford commit will look to make it 3-for-3 this winter.

Michael O'Malley, Hasbrouck Heights, junior: O'Malley fell to Bound Brook's Mekhi Lewis in the 145-pound title bout in Atlantic City in March and will have his eyes set on a state championship again this season at 152.

Kyle Cochran, Paramus, senior: Cochran, a Region third last

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MICHAEL KARAS/NORTHJERSEY.COM

Bergen Catholic junior Shane Griffith is already a two-time state champion. Will he make it 3-for-3 this season?

Wrestlers

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year, stole the show in Atlantic City in March to claim the 160-pound title with a slew of upset victories over Region champions. He defeated Don Bosco's previously undefeated Kyle Bierdumpfel in the final to claim Paramus' state title since 1982.

Garrett Beam, Queen of Peace, junior: One of the premiere wrestlers for the Golden Griffiths, Beam took eighth at 152 pounds in Atlantic City in March and will be eyeing a return to the podium this winter.

Shane Sosinsky, Northern Highlands, senior: Sosinsky reached last year's 170-pound title bout before taking second in the state following a loss to Bergen Catholic's Joe Grello.

Dominick Mandarino, Don Bosco, senior: The two-time state medalist and last year's third-place finisher at 152 pounds offered his verbal commitment to Stanford to continue his career in the off-season. He went 27-3 last year.

Upper weights

Bradon Kui, DePaul, senior: Kui is the reigning state champion at 182 pounds and already a three-time Fargo All-American. He will enter his senior season with a 107-19 career mark.

Josh McKenzie, Bergen Catholic, sophomore: Garnering national attention before even entering high school, McKenzie ended his freshman season with a fifth-place finish at 182 pounds.

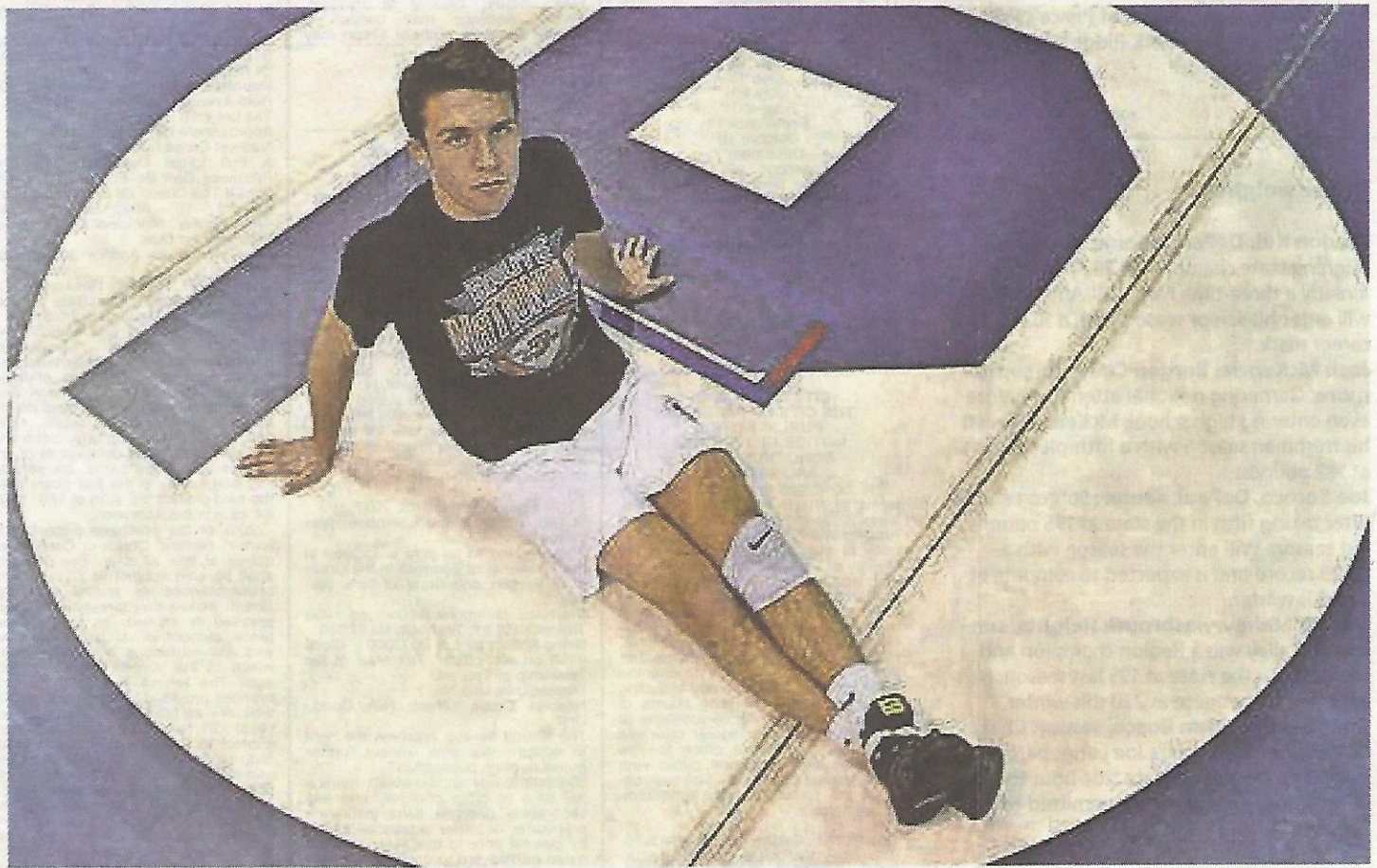
Joe Soreco, DePaul, senior: Soreco returns after taking fifth in the state at 195 pounds last season. Will enter the season with a 62-29 record and is expected to compete at 220 this winter.

Sean O'Malley, Hasbrouck Heights, senior: O'Malley was a Region champion and took sixth in the state at 195 last season. He's expected to compete at 220 this winter.

Eric Chakonis, Don Bosco, senior: Chakonis defeated River Dell's Joe Longobardi in last year's 285-pound state title bout to cap a 27-4 season. He is already committed to Bucknell.

WRESTLING

AROUND THE LEAGUES



FILE PHOTO

Paramus' Kyle Cochran captured the 160-pound state champions last season. What will he do for an encore?

PRESEASON TOP 25

1. Bergen Catholic	15-2
2. Don Bosco	10-4
3. DePaul	15-2
4. Queen of Peace	14-1
5. Clifton	21-3
6. Emerson/Park Ridge	23-2
7. NV/Old Tappan	18-5
8. River Dell	16-4
9. Paramus	20-4
10. Pompton Lakes	16-9
11. Passaic Valley	14-9
12. Wayne Valley	16-7

13. Hackensack	13-9
14. North Bergen	13-4
15. Ridgewood	17-7
16. Garfield	18-5
17. Fair Lawn	18-8
18. Passaic Tech	13-6
19. Wayne Hills	14-4
20. Cresskill	25-4
21. Westwood	16-8
22. Butler	18-4
23. Ramsey	15-7
24. Hasbrouck Heights	18-11
25. Pequannock	11-9

(Records from 2015-16)

DATES TO REMEMBER

Dates to remember

- Dec. 16: Opening day
- Dec. 17-18: Beast of the East at the University of Delaware
- Dec. 28-29: Bergen County Holiday tournament
- Dec. 28-29: Powerade Wrestling Tournament in Pittsburgh, PA
- Jan. 15: Two-pound growth allowance
- Jan. 22: Who's #1 Duals at University of Pennsylvania
- Jan. 28: Passaic County tournament at West Milford
- Jan. 28: Qualifying cutoff
- Jan. 31: Team tournament seeding
- Feb. 4: End of season for 30 matches
- Feb. 6: Team sectional quarterfinals
- Feb. 8: Team sectional semifinals
- Feb. 10: Team sectional finals
- Feb. 12: Group finals at Pine Bet Arena, Toms River
- Feb. 15: District seeding
- Feb. 17-18: Districts
- Feb. 22-25: Regions
- Feb. 27: State seeding meeting
- March 3-5: Wrestling Championships in Atlantic City, Boardwalk Hall

TEAM-BY-TEAM LOOK AT LOCALS

JJ CONRAD

STAFF WRITER

BIG NORTH

FREEDOM DIVISION

Hackensack finished 13-9 last season and expects to be a contender with "quality wrestlers throughout the lineup," according to coach John Stallone. Among them include four region qualifiers from last year — junior Jonathan Becker (113), junior Corey Eyer (120), senior Nick Monteleone (138) and senior Jeffery Bryan (182).

Indian Hills will continue to rebuild after going winless in 2015-16. Junior Andrew Litchult (132/138) and sophomore Jacob Bekhet (145/152) both return on a team that will be both young and inexperienced.

Northern Highlands will be led by senior Shane Sosinsky, who took second in the state at 170 last year after falling to Bergen Catholic's Joe Grello in the title bout. Sosinsky already has accumulated 108 career wins. The Highlanders also bring back 120-pounder Nick Pini, a junior and returning district champion, and sophomore 170-pounder Anthony Sciuto, who earned a third-place finish at districts last year. Freshman 113-pounder Devin Iannelli anchors a strong freshmen class.

Paramus will be headlined by returning state champion Kyle Cochran at 160 and Brian Bonino at 195, both seniors, and junior Kyle Kaiser in the lower weights. The Spartans have been on the doorstep of a team state championship the past two years, but fell to Delsea in the final in 2015 and Delsea again in last year's Group 3 semifinals. To get back, newcomers will have to emerge to replace a strong graduated senior class that sent seven wrestlers to Atlantic City last season.

Ramapo returns all but two starters from last year's 13-12 team and the Green Raiders will be a senior-laden group this season, led by 145-pounder Sean O'Connor and 195-pounder John Guerriero. The hope is to qualify for the team state tournament for the first time. Sophomore Luke Brantly also returns for Ramapo after placing third in districts last year and junior Austin Scher is back after winning 20 matches last season. Sophomore Justin Leonard is back at 126 after a 21-win season and sophomore Mike Simone returns after earning a district runner-up finish in 2015-16.

Ridgewood went 16-8 last season and its success this season will "hinge on our upperclassmen's leadership and our roster staying healthy," coach Torre Watson said. The Maroons will be led by senior heavyweight Jack Simpson (District 4th last year) and a trio of returning Region qualifiers in junior Bryan Calton (145), junior Jack Trevisan (138) and sophomore Jimmy Probert (132).

PATRIOT DIVISION

Mahwah is coming off a 13-14 season and has a solid core to improve that record this winter. Junior Matt Surich returns at 132 and junior Travis Arata is back at 145 after both placed third in District 5 last year. And senior captains Kyle Shaffer (152), Dan Nelson (126) and Dan Surich (182) are all also back. Shaffer has qualified for regions the past two seasons, Nelson was a District 5 champion last year and district third in 2015 and Surich also has earned back-to-back third-place finishes in districts the past two years.

Pascack Hills went 16-8 last season, but enters a rebuilding mode, according to coach Dave Bucco, after losing three of its top wrestlers — Adam Castrillon, Deven Deppert and Dom Campana — to season-ending football injuries. "It is tough to overcome three injuries that would have equaled a minimum of 75 wins," Bucco said. The Cowboys will lean on senior 126-pounder Joe Keller, a district finalist a year ago, and senior Sal Campana at 220, a county medalist and returning district third.

Ramsey will be in transition, going from a senior-laden squad to one mostly comprised of sopho-

mores and juniors. The Rams do return four senior starters, however, and all are coming off double-digit win seasons, including one from Mario Ferraro, who was a BCCA 6th and District 2nd. Ross Woods also returns after earning a BCCA 5th and District 4th, as does Joey Kalksma (25-10 last year) and Bryon Zabala.

River Dell enjoyed a strong 16-4 season and returns seniors Jotaro Kurachi (113, District 3rd), Andreas Harilou (195, District 2nd) and Patrick Rizzo (170, 20-match winner) and junior Paul Kallensee (145, 20-match winner). Coach Mike Tota enters with a career 268-84-1 record.

Westwood lost only one senior from last year's 16-8 team and returns 12 wrestlers with varsity experience. The Cardinals bring back sophomore 120-pounder Trent Furman, who won 36 matches last year and placed fourth at Regions. Also back is sophomore Julian Robles (113), senior Brandon Brown (182) and junior Aidan Fernandez (160).

UNITED DIVISION

Bergen Catholic figures to be among the best teams in both the state and county with a roster littered with championship-caliber talent. The Crusaders return four state placewinners, headlined by two-time state champion Shane Griffith, who is a junior. Junior Gerard Angelo returns after taking third at 120 last year, junior Carmen Ferrante is back after taking fifth at 113 and sophomore Josh McKenzie returns after placing fifth at 182. Keep an eye on a pair of highly touted freshmen — Nick Kayal and Robert Howard — in the lower weights and sophomores Wade Unger and Chris Foca in the middle weights.

DePaul is likely to again be among the top programs, anchored by senior Brandon Kui, a returning state champion with a 107-19 career record. Daniel Percelay (126) returns after taking seventh in the state last year and 220-pounder Joe Soreco is back after taking fifth in the state last season. Keep an eye on freshman Connor O'Neill (120) after capturing a NJ Youth state title and sophomores Nicky and Ricky Cabanillas, two Bergen Catholic transfers, at 126 and 145, respectively.

Don Bosco brings back reigning 285-pound state champion Eric Chakonis and senior Dominick Mandarin, a returning third-place finisher last season at 152. The Ironmen will feature senior Evan DeLuise, senior Alec Corrao and junior Pete Acciardi. Keep an eye on freshman Justin Bierdumpefel in the lower weights. He is the younger brother of former Don Bosco star, Kyle, who reached four state final bouts.

Paramus Catholic will be rebuilding again this year, according to coach Jon Piela, after a 2-20 season last winter. Seniors Vincent Gazzillo (182) and Justin De LaCruz (145), junior Liam Lynch (170) and sophomores Sean Fareon (106/113), Sebastian Silverio (120) and John Manichetti (160) will lead the program.

St. Joseph has a new head coach in Damion Logan, a former alumni who athletic director Tony Karcich said is "without question the most accomplished wrestler we've ever had here." Logan was a three-time state champion and four-time state finalist from 1993-96. The Green Knights finished 4-10 last season and will be in transition, but Logan's presence has increased the numbers in the wrestling room.

LIBERTY DIVISION

Clifton enjoyed a 21-3 season last year and expects to be a contender. Senior 138-pounder and Region runner-up James Murdoch returns along with reigning District champion and Region fourth Jacob Abill at 285. Junior Matt DePasque (120, District third), senior A.J. Tudda (132, District second), senior Sean Yadimarcio (152, District third) and senior Anaes Allan (195, District third) all return.

Kennedy will be a young team with just three returning seniors. Among those returners include

See LEAGUES, Page 8S

Leagues

Continued from Page 75

Abu Baker, Sergio Ventura and Will Lyde.

Passaic will be a young team, but the program brings back senior Keith Coyotyl (120), sophomore Edwin Morales (132), Junior Brian Vasquez (145), senior Royce Francisco (152) and senior Ysabel (182).

Passaic Tech features a lineup with many returning lettermen and wrestling experience following a 14-6 campaign. Senior Hamzeh Sheika returns at 132 after going 28-6 last season, as does junior Loai Hamdeh at 113 (21-11 last season). Senior Demetrius Pagan (120 pounds) is back after going 26-7.

INDEPENDENCE DIVISION

Fair Lawn went 18-8 last year and expects to be a contender again with depth, balance and a strong group of impact freshmen, led by two-time rec state champion Dylan Cedeno. Region qualifiers Ben Cohen (31-7 last year) and Joe Covino (31-9), Ryan Rue (24-8) and Mike Checinski (24-13) are all back.

Lakeland returns district champion Chris Castiglia, a junior, at 106 and district second Kelvin Gonzalez, also a junior, at 170. Keep an eye on seniors Jack Carroll (138), Matt Naranjo (152) and Alex Sienko (182).

Passaic Valley coach Joe Benvenuti expects his team to be in contention for league, county, district and state sectional titles with five wrestlers coming off 20-plus win seasons. The team's leaders will be senior Kenny Kerwin (113 or 120) and senior Nick Denora (106 or 113). Junior Tom Marretta had a 22-win season a year ago at heavyweight and will be at 220 this season.

Wayne Hills lost eight seniors from last year's team but coach Brian Basile still believes his team can be competitive in the league and newly aligned district. The Patriots bring back Aidan Broderick (113), Anthony Zungolli (126), Anthony Rua (132), JD Ramirez (182), Chris Buzzelli (195) and Pete Dellechiaie (HWT).

Wayne Valley finished 16-7 last season and reached the North 1, Group 4 semifinals, where it fell to Roxbury, 40-23. Seniors Connor Murphy, Jacob Tareky, Dean Zindaki and Jake Pluta all are back; as are sophomores Nick Trani and Reid Colella.

West Milford finished 10-15 last season, but "numbers are back up," according to coach Taylor Pevny. Senior heavyweight Eric Lindstrom returns after a 22-5 season one year ago and the Highlanders will have sophomore 126-pounder Trevor Fleet, a transfer from Passaic Tech and reigning district champion, in the lineup this season. Senior 170-pounder Vinny Boratto also returns.

NATIONAL DIVISION

Bergenfield ended last season 6-16 and is led this season by Carlos Haynes (District second) and reigning District champion Robbie Torres. The Bears will bring back eight returning varsity wrestlers, which has coach John Magaraci hoping they can be a competitive team.

NV/Demarest finished 3-20, but coach Brendan Guarino expects to be in contention for a division title with the experience coming back. Junior Bailey Paster (District third) returns at 195 or 220, senior Ami Ohring is back at 145 after going 24-6 last year and sophomore Nicolas Weber is also back at 106 after placing third in District 8. Junior Dylan Barry (138) also returns after going 18-5 last year.

NV/Old Tappan went 18-5 last season and coach Rob Ortiz expects another big year with 10 seniors and a well-balanced, experienced lineup. Back for the Golden Knights include senior Declan Ward at 152 (25 wins, District champion), junior Matthew Murawski at 113 (30 wins, District 2nd) and senior Peter Andresen at 138 (District 3rd).

Pascack Valley finished 9-8 last season and has a good core coming back, according to coach Tom Gallione. Among the returners include senior Rob Arloro (145 or 152), junior Nolan Shields (120 or 126), sophomore Matt Beyer (132) and sophomore Tommy Chiellini (138), all Region qualifiers. Junior Casey Lewis (170 or 182), Robbie Natelli (120) and Will Morris (160 or 170) all also return.

Teaneck coach James Nonas said it's a "building year" with many first-year wrestlers. The Highwaymen have good numbers in the program — "the best we've had in years, Nonas said — but many never wrestled prior to this year. Among the team's returners include senior Lawrence Ortiz, a Region 2 qualifier the past two years, and senior Quinton Navarro, who was a 20-plus match winner last season.

Tenafly will be led by its four senior captains: Thomas Rafferty, Jack DeSalvo, Ryan Welch and Alex Aljian. Though the Tigers went 3-14 last year, they do bring back some returning varsity experience and coach Chris Marren is hoping for a winning season, something that has not been achieved in several years.

AMERICAN DIVISION

Cliffside Park returns senior Naseem Elayan at 132 or 138, a returning District and Region champion with 34 wins last season, and senior Noah Argueta at 182, a returning district champ. Junior Kenny Pena also returns at 160 or 170 after winning a district title and Austin Hufnagel is back at 106.

Dumont finished 14-11 last season and coach Michael Rooney expects to be a contender with a "very talented group of young wrestlers." Among the underclassmen include sophomores Gianni Manginelli, Joseph Manginelli and Jarred Tolotti — a trio of first team all-league selections last year. Also back for the Huskies are seniors Mike Vietri and Luis Mercedes.

Dwight Morrow is coming off a 1-16 season and finished in last place in the District 7 tournament.

Fort Lee will be led by seniors Marco Herrera at 182 and Claudio Estrada at 138 and junior standout Nick Tantillo at 195. Coach Gerard Carroll expects his talented sophomores Sean Hernandez and Alejandro Perez to breakout this season.

Ridgefield Park finished .500 last season and coach Dennis Murri expects to be a contender this season with returning division champions and strong young talent. Senior 138-pounder Jake Gambo, senior 170-pounder William Rodriguez and junior 220-pounder Juan Mejia all return after earning first team all-division honors last year. Sophomore Jon Perez (132) and senior Owyn Medina (145) both also return.

NJIC

DIVISION 1

Garfield, the NJIC Division 2 champion the past two seasons, returns junior Josh Ferreira (106/113) after taking second in the BCCA tournament, first in District 6 and second in Region 2. Also back from last year's 18-5 squad is senior and region qualifier Matthew Spoto at 120. Senior Jordan Robinson (126/132) is coming off a 34-5 season that included a District 6 title and Region 2 third-place finish. Junior Luis Gomez also returns after going 22-7 and winning a District 6 title, as does sophomore Michael Fillieri at 195 (District 6 third-place finish).

Leonia finished 12-10 one year ago. It will be relatively inexperienced this season, but is coming off its first winning season in over 12 years. Among those looking to make a name for themselves include juniors Sayid Elmoudni (170) and Dane Gannon (138) and seniors Gerald Li

(145), Matt De Silva (103) and Julian Spilatro (160).

Lyndhurst/North Arlington was 9-8 last season but coach Joe Collins must rebuild a roster that lost seven senior starters. This year's squad will be small in terms of numbers, but the program brings back Region qualifier Matt Daub, a junior, and senior Christian Campana.

Lodi returns three-time district champion Chris Caban at 126, returning district 3rd Chris Kennedy at 152, seniors David Pena (160) and John Zecca (145) and sophomore Sean Tocci (182). Romario Richards enters the varsity lineup this season after capturing the BCAA freshman county title last season.

Manchester went 5-17 last season and took seventh place out of nine teams in the District 5 tournament.

Queen of Peace finished 14-1 last year and expectations remain high behind senior Dominic Mainiero, a returning Region champion and state seventh, at 182 and senior Ray Wetzel, also a reigning Region champion and state eighth, at 132. Junior Garrett Beam returns at 152 after placing eighth in the state after a Region third-place finish and Queen of Peace also brings back a pair of juniors in Matt Armamento (120) and Enrique Sanchez (113), both District champions and Region fourths. Keep an eye on sophomore Jacob Cardenas at 170 and freshman Will Grater at 106, too.

DIVISION 2

Becton coach Mike Settembrino says his team "needs some freshmen and new varsity wrestlers to contribute in order to be competitive." Returning this season include senior Phil Ruiz at 132 (District second), sophomore Adib Karobi at 152 and junior Nico Falla at 160.

Emerson/Park Ridge coach Stan Woods is set for his 50th season, with a 704-219-9 career record, and is one year removed from capturing the Group 2 state title. The co-op program could be in contention for a repeat with Luke Mazzeo (36-5) at 126 at Josh Lewis (25-5) at 182 and Zach Lewis (27-13) at 195. Emerson/Park Ridge also brings in two talented freshmen in Nick Babin and Logan Mazzeo and return Caiden Brouwer at 120, 160-pounder Jonah Schechtman (24-13) and Shane Carcich (18-12) also both return.

Glen Rock finished 6-20 last season but coach Corey Fitzpatrick is hoping to improve that mark this winter with a strong junior class. Among those junior returners include Kyle Fisher at 152 (District third), Matt Fellini at 120 and Ricky Correa at 132.

Rutherford won just two matches last year and continues the rebuilding process with a "lack of numbers," according to coach Jeff Rehalin. Senior 152-pounder Omar Abdelhamid returns after a strong 26-6 campaign last season.

Waldwick/Midland Park is rebuilding after going winless last season and according to coach Hamid Chalileh, the program does have some returning wrestlers with talent. Among them include Joe Parsons, Nick Melosh, Matt Massner and Matt Rypkema.

DIVISION 3

Bogota/Weehawken will look to returning 19-match winner Michael Martinez (120), a senior, Region qualifier Evan Schroer (220/HWT), a junior, and 17-match winner Jevon Stephenson (160), a junior, to lead a young team that will be primarily made up on sophomores and first-year varsity wrestlers.

Elmwood Park ended 9-21 last season and coach Tom Mulligan said his program is "rebuilding, trying to turn the corner." The Crusaders bring back 11 returners, including seven starters. The team will be led by senior Tyreeke Martin at 170 and juniors Diego Mendoza (120) and Tyler Martinez (138), a returning District second.

Hawthorne will be led by seniors Sean Agnello (145) and Rey Miller (195), both returning District champions. Also back for the Bears include junior Ruben Alvarez at 120, senior Cesar Picado at 132, sophomore Kris Coya at 220 and senior Gio Occhipinti at 138.

New Milford expects big years from seniors John Burger at 138, Brett Korbmer at 182 and Mike Urgiles at 220, a trio of Region qualifiers last year. The Knights have 12 seniors on the team, including Dane Terry (145), Zack Tufaro (152) and Ryan Mulligan (160) and coach Ray Cottlers is hoping that experience leads to an improvement from last year's 12-12 record.

Pompton Lakes will bring back senior Chris Grecco, who was a state qualifier last year at 138. Grecco headlines a team that has 10 returning varsity starters, which also includes returning District champion Chris Puglisi, Passaic County and District second Drew Flynn and County third Nick Negrini. Justin Juchnewich also returns after a 20-win season last year, as does Logan Mahoney (15 wins), Nick Secor (13 wins), Frank Negrini (22 wins) and Brian Fego (15 wins).

DIVISION 4

Cresskill was one of the top small-school programs in North Jersey last season going 24-5, but the program must replace eight graduated starters and 10 varsity letterwinners. Seniors Wyatt Ross and David Monaco return, along with sophomore Owen Ross, Kenny Spadaccini, Shane Fedorov and Jacob Hamburger and junior Michael Chambers.

Hasbrouck Heights coach Craig Messery expects a big year after graduating only one senior from last season's 18-11 squad. Region champion and state runner-up Michael O'Malley, a junior, returns at 152, Region champ and state sixth Sean O'Malley, a senior, returns at 220, and state quarterfinalist Matthew Dellara, a junior, returns at 145.

Saddle Brook hopes to qualify for the state team tournament one year after finishing 10-14. To do so, the Falcons will lean on senior Michael Terwilliger at 132 (District third), junior George Mardo at 220 (District third), juniors Anthony Bisanti at 182 and Vin Camilleri at 160 (Both District fourths) and junior CJ Limatola at 113, a Region qualifier last year.

Secaucus is still a program that is rebuilding, according to coach Ed Roesing, but the Patriots do have a solid group of returners among a team that is primarily young and inexperienced. Senior Saummy Duran (220), junior Cesar Quinones (182), junior Louis Pinto (126) and junior Robinson Reyes (170) comprise the top returners for Secaucus.

Wood-Ridge is back for its second year after going 5-13 last season. The Blue Devils are still rebuilding, but have some pieces in place to improve their win total from last year.

HCCIA

North Bergen brings back junior Yousef Salem, one year after the grappler reached Atlantic City after a third-place finish in regions at 106. He could be jumping to 120 or 126 this season. Senior Cruz Donato will make the move from 182 to 195 and senior Al Taña, moving from 138 to 152, also returns.

NWJAC

Boonton finished 8-9 last season and bring back Danny Fongaro at 132. Fongaro was a District finalist last year at 113.

Burlington returns Brandon Wyble at 120, Wayde Kennedy and Steven Schubert at 160 or 170, and coach Jason Luciani said Ben Bariso (106), the Wyble twins (Brandon and Randy) and Alfred Battipede (195) had strong offseasons.

Kinnelon expects to improve on its 11-10 record of a year ago after graduating just three seniors. Coach Eric DiColo said those three have been replaced with experienced wrestlers and a strong freshmen class.

Pequannock went 11-9 last year but may be in rebuilding mode after losing nine seniors from last year's team. Junior Joe Carmichael (District third) returns at 120, as does senior Steve Pocze (District third) at 126.

12/28/2016

New Milford's Berger closes in on Bergen wrestling title berth

SEAN FARRELL

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HACKENSACK – The focus was always on days like today.

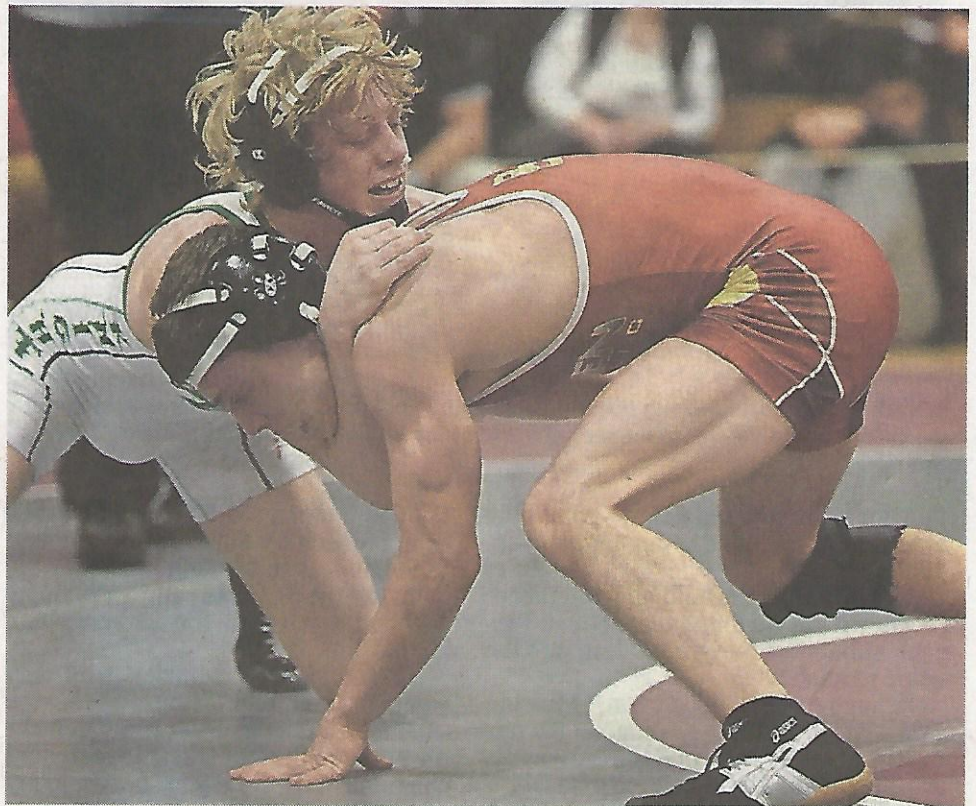
Even after all those wins on the football field. Even after the one-handed interception that made headlines.

Nothing for John Burger is quite like the experience of stepping onto the wrestling mat, feeling the urgency to attack and staring down an opponent with his long, blonde hair swaying from side to side. It's why he wrestled just about every other day even while playing for the Knights' football team.

The New Milford senior is a wrestler at heart. And a pretty good one.

He's made it back to the second day of the BCCA George Jockish Holiday Wrestling Tournament. And he's gunning for more than just second place.

"[Winning] is my ultimate goal for this tournament," said Burger, who faces



FILE PHOTO BY CHRIS PEDOTA/NORTHJERSEY.COM

Nick Suriano of Bergen Catholic got the best of John Burger of New Milford during last year's match-up. But Burger found success at the George Jockish Holiday tournament Wednesday.

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Burger

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Waldwick/Midland Park's Joseph Parsons in the semifinals on Thursday. "It would mean a lot."

A year ago, Burger was on the wrong end of Nick Suriano's historic run. He lost tough battles to Bergen Catholic's undefeated champion in the finals of the district, region and county tournament.

"Nick is not one to mince words," said Ray Cottiers, New Milford's fifth-year coach. "When he speaks, he means it. [After the region final], he said to me that John was one of the toughest opponents he ever came across. Coming from

a kid like that speaks volumes to the type of competitor that John is."

Now Suriano is off at Penn State. And Burger is the man to beat. He's the top-seeded wrestler in the 138-pound bracket. That hasn't changed the tenacity that's made him a star at New Milford.

"Whether he's the top seed or second seed or no seed, he wrestles like the underdog," Cottiers said. "He wrestles like it's him against the world."

It only took 38 seconds for Burger to pin Fort Lee's Roberto Claudio Estrad in his first match on Wednesday. In the next round, he won a 3-1 decision over Hasbrouck Heights' Jason Dal Cortivo after staying aggressive from start to finish.

It was the 107th win in his career, the most all-time at New Milford.

"I know I could be going anywhere

and doing just as well," Burger said. "But I do like the fact that I'm able to set all these school records because we're from a small school."

And Burger isn't the only wrestler from New Milford still alive. Mike Urgiles made the semifinals in the 220-pound bracket, the furthest he's ever advanced in the tournament.

"It's just from hard work every day and just having the mentality to never give up," Urgiles said.

"It's not an easy sport. You have to give it your all. You can't just give it part of yourself."

Cottiers said New Milford hasn't had a Bergen County champion since 1992.

Burger is hoping to change that and rewrite the school record books one more time.

12/28/2016

Hasbrouck Heights' O'Malley cruises into county semifinals

JJ CONRAD
STAFF WRITER

HACKENSACK — He is a reigning state runner-up and one of just two returning BCCA George Jockish Holiday Tournament champions. But good luck getting Hasbrouck Heights' Michael O'Malley to talk much about himself or his impressive list of accomplishments.

"Mickey's a guy who's never gonna tell anybody what he's feeling," Hasbrouck Heights coach Craig Messery said. "But I know he's a competitor because I'm in that room with him every day. I know he wants to win. Whether he's

telling you, or me, or anybody that he doesn't care... he cares."

The humble, soft-spoken and talented Aviators' junior star, who captured last year's BCCA 152-pound title, cruised into this year's Holiday tournament 160-pound semifinals on Wednesday with back-to-back, first-period pins of North Bergen's Robert Nevarez and Ramapo's Luke Brantly. He was on the mat for a combined 3:38 in his two victories and will meet Don Bosco's Alec Corrao in Thursday's semifinals.

But one of the top developing stories in this year's event is the fact O'Malley — who took second in the state at 145 pounds last season after leading New Jersey in wins with a 46-1 record — could square off with reigning 160-pound state champion Kyle Cochran, of Paramus, in Thursday's championship bout should both win their semifinal bouts. O'Malley

said he still plans to wrestle at 152 for the state tournament, while Cochran — who reached the semifinals with a pair of second-period pins Wednesday — will remain at 160 for all major tournaments.

"I'd always rather wrestle in tournaments like this and take on good competition than wrestle somewhere else and wrestle a bunch of nobodies," O'Malley said. "I'd rather go against better kids. For me, if I see Cochran, I've got nothing to lose. He's the champion and I'm... I'm just second."

O'Malley was one of the catalysts sparking a big day for Hasbrouck Heights, as Messery said the team's goal is to finish as the tournament's highest Group 1 school finisher for the third straight year. The Aviators are currently third in the overall team standings with 80 points, behind only Don Bosco (102.5) and Emerson/Park Ridge (89.5).

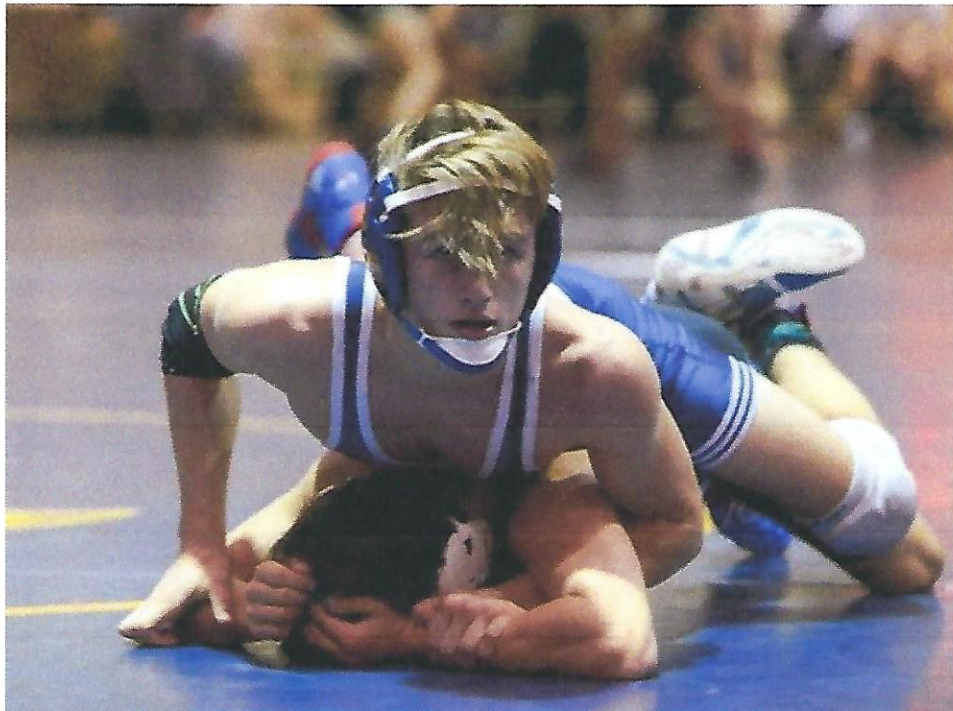
The Aviators brought 11 wrestlers to Hackensack, with eight reaching the quarterfinals. Four advanced to Thursday's semifinals, including O'Malley's

brother, Sean, at 220 pounds, Matt Dallara at 145 and Abdul Aksu at 170.

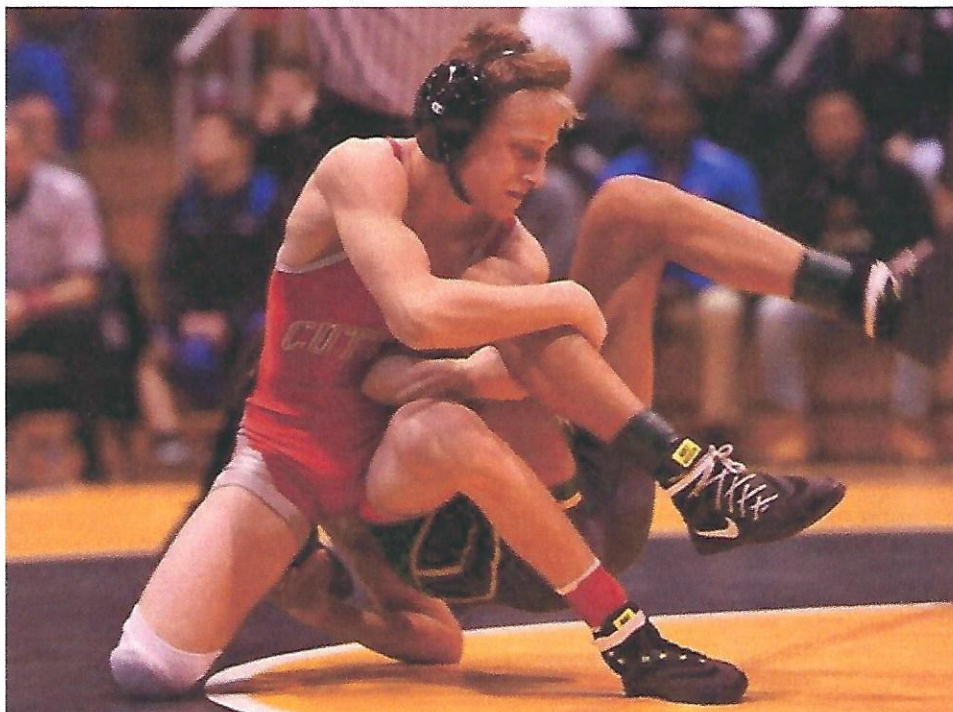
Aksu's run to the semifinals comes just two years after finishing 1-16 his freshman year. "And that one win was a bye," Messery said.

TAKEDOWNS

Paramus' Kyle Kaiser, the other returning Holiday champion after winning last year's 106-pound title, reached the 113-pound semifinals with a 6-0 decision over Don Bosco's Jordan Iannone and win by technical fall, 23-8, over Cresskill's Owen Ross. ... Highly touted 106-pound freshmen Dylan Cedeno, of Fair Lawn, and Justin Bierdumpefel, of Don Bosco, both reached Thursday's semifinals. Both are nationally ranked. ... Dumont sophomore twins Joe and Gianni Manginelli both advanced to Thursday's semifinals. Joe will take on Saddle Brook's CJ Limatola in a 113-pound semi, while Gianni will meet North Bergen's Yousef Salem in a 120-pound semifinal bout. A third Dumont wrestler, Michael Vietri, also reached the 152-pound semifinals after his 9-3 win over Mahwah's Kyle Shaffer in the quarterfinals.



Paramus wrestler Kyle Kaiser is in control as he advances to the 113 lb final. Kyle took home the gold with a 6-5 decision over Dumont's Joe Manginelli.



Fair Lawn freshman Dylan Cedeno stuns the crowd at Hackensack with a 45 second pin over tough St Joseph junior Samuel Eddie Alvarez.

HACKENSACK — The piece of paper with a list of personal goals sits on the desk beside Dylan Cedeno's bed. The daily source of motivation and inspiration for the Fair Lawn freshman star was the first thing he looked at Thursday morning, knowing an opportunity to check off one important item off the list was within reach.

He capitalized on that opportunity in a big way, leaving no doubt who the best 106-pounder in Bergen County was at this year's George Jockish Holiday Tournament.

"That's correct, yeah," Cedeno said with a smile. "I can check off one more thing on that list tonight."

Cedeno captured the 106-pound title in dominant fashion with a 45-second pin of St. Joseph's Sammy Alvarez, one match after Alvarez upset Don Bosco's

Justin Bierdumpfel in the 106-pound semifinals. Cedeno, now 9-0 this season, breezed through the bracket as the tournament's top seed with wins by technical fall, pin and major decision before his quick work of Alvarez in the final.

He became Fair Lawn's first BCCA Holiday champion since Dillon Landi accomplished the feat in 2004.

"It's an honor to be a county champion, because I knew it hadn't been done here in a while," Cedeno said. "I'm glad to be the guy to bring that title back to Fair Lawn. It's definitely a proud moment to end that drought."

Cedeno was not only the only freshman champion at this year's BCCA Holiday Tournament, he was also the only finalist. Pound for pound, he's proving more and more each week to be as much of a state-champion-caliber wrestler as anyone else in North Jersey.

"There's been a lot of hype about me and people expecting things of me," said Cedeno, who cruised in similar fashion to the Cutter Classic title earlier this season with a trio of first-period pins in his high school debut.

"I guess I'm living up to that hype right now. But I have to keep the same mindset to come out and dominate.

"Right now I feel like I'm at the top. And when that's the case, people are going to try and knock you down."

Paramus' Cochran holds off HH's O'Malley in OT thriller

Paramus' Kyle Cochran felt disrespected.

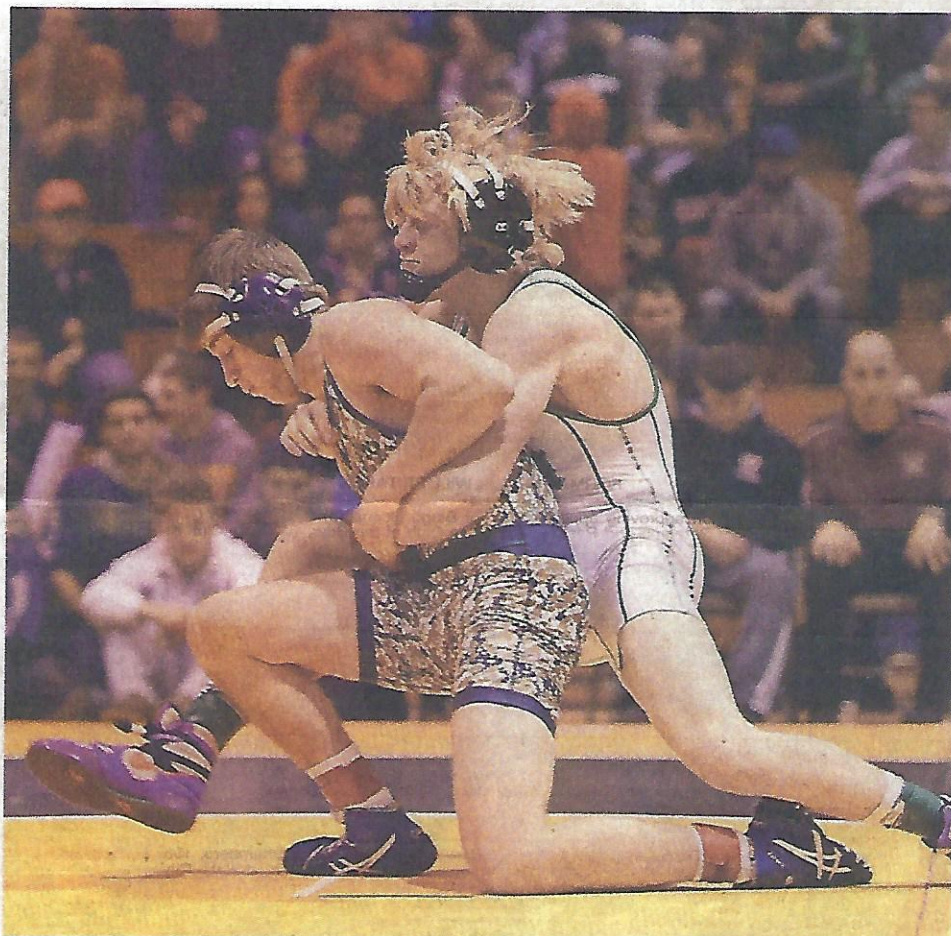
The reigning 160-pound state champion felt the 160-pound was "his bracket" and that Hasbrouck Heights' Michael O'Malley bumped up from 152 to "try and come take what was mine."

With the BCCA saving the most-anticipated bout of the night for the tournament finale, the Cochran-O'Malley championship battle lived up to the hype.

Cochran won, 8-6, in overtime but needed a late reversal in the final seconds of the third period to tie the bout at 5 and force extra time.

"I definitely have way too many dramatic matches," Cochran, who had a few

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MICHAEL KARAS/NORTHJERSEY.COM

John Burger of New Milford, right on his way to pinning Peter Andresen of NV/Old Tappan to win the 138-pound championship Thursday at the Bergen County holiday tournament.

during his run to the 160-pound state title last season, said with a smile. "Way too many. In that third, I didn't even know what the score was [after a five-point move gave O'Malley a 5-3 lead with 30 seconds left]."

"We can be friends outside the mat, but once that match starts, I've got to do what I've got to do. It's war. He's trying to take what I have, and I'm not going to let that happen."

Cochran led, 3-0, after two and was seemingly in control of the match until a reversal and three back points put O'Malley up, 5-3. O'Malley was a state runner-up at 145 pounds last season.

"I don't even know what happened," Cochran said. "But Matt Ulrich, our assistant coach, he prepared me to win states, prepared me to win Nationals. He's been with me all throughout my best accomplishments, and the move I

did to tie it, that was a move we've worked on."

In OT, with Cochran on bottom, the Paramus senior used an escape/takedown to take an 8-5 lead before giving up a point and holding on for the victory.

"I don't look at it like the end of the world if I lose," Cochran said. "I train like it is the end of the world. But if I lose, I know I'd come back. I lose, I come back. I've done it. So I'm relaxed because of that in those late situations I've been in. I'm going to do whatever I can in my ability not to lose, though. And that's exactly what I did."

Cochran capped a big night for Paramus, which claimed three individual titles. Kyle Kaiser claimed the 113-pound title to repeat as a BCCA champ and Brian Bonino captured the 195-pound title with a thrilling, 3-1 OT win over Emerson/Park Ridge's Josh Lewis.

12/29/2016

Don Bosco's Acciardi grabs the title at 220

SEAN FARRELL

STAFF WRITER, @SEANFARRELL92

HACKENSACK - From the middle of the mat, Pete Acciardi proudly watched the final seconds tick away.

The last few seconds before earning a win he had always hoped for. The last few before he could finally call himself a Bergen County champion.

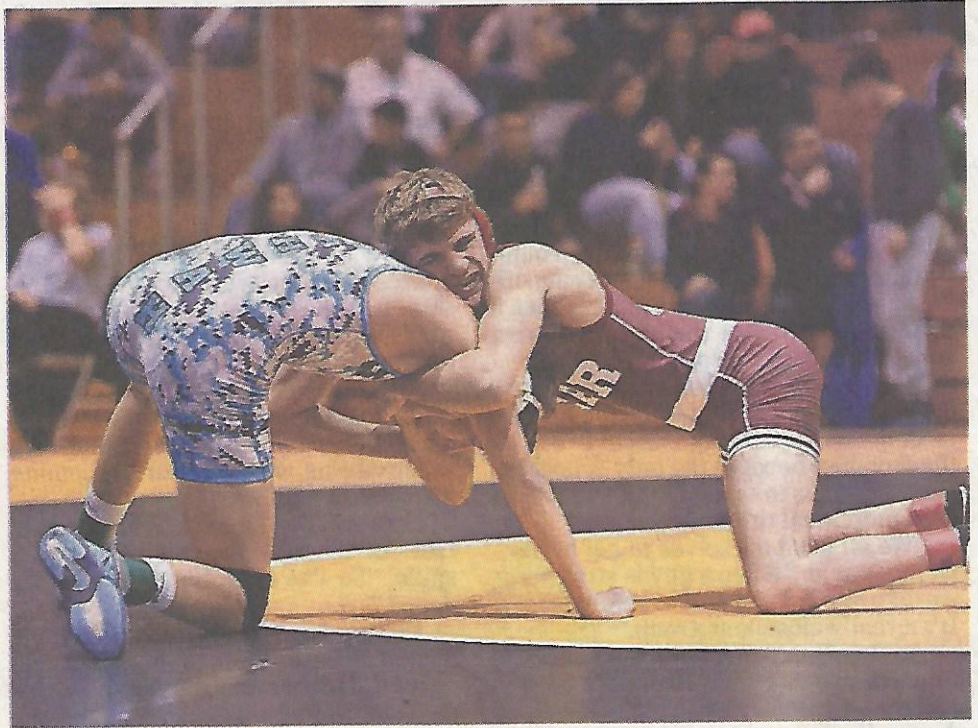
Acciardi stole a quick glance at the clock as he closed in on 5-2 victory on Thursday over Hasbrouck Heights' Sean O'Malley in the 220-pound final of the BCCA George Jockish Holiday Wrestling Tournament.

Just before the clock hit zero, the Don Bosco junior pumped his fist. He had his opponent in control and the packed crowd at Hackensack grew louder and louder.

His moment had arrived.

"I'd see it in my dreams a lot," Acciardi said. "It's really crazy watching it become a reality."

And there was plenty for Acciardi to celebrate besides his own success. Strong performances from the upper



MICHAEL KARAS

Emerson/Park Ridge's Luke Mazzeo, right, battles Matt Surich of Mahwah in their 126-pound final match Thursday. Mazzeo won by major decision to take the George Jockish tourney title.

See ACCIARDI, Page 8S

Acciardi

Continued from Page 7S

weights helped the Ironmen win the BCCA team title for the first time since 2011. It ended a four-year winning streak for Bergen Catholic, who did not enter the tournament this season.

"My brother [Zack] won it for Don Bosco back when he was a freshman," heavyweight champion Eric Chakonis said. "For me to bring the title back as a senior means a lot."

Don Bosco went 4-for-4 in the finals with Evan DeLuise (145) and Dom Mandarino (170) also coming away with individual titles. The Ironmen earned a total of 201 points to withstand tough challenges from Emerson/Park Ridge,

North Bergen and Hasbrouck Heights.

"We've been pushing hard as a group," DeLuise said. "It's hard work paying off. We have a lot of seniors who have given it their all in their last run and it's a great way to start [the season]."

DeLuise earned a 3-2 decision victory over Hasbrouck Heights' Matthew Dallara in his championship match. It helped the Ironmen become the only school besides Paramus to have multiple wrestlers earn individual titles.

"We all push ourselves to get better," DeLuise said. "When a guy is struggling, we help him out and do whatever you can. It's a really close-knit group."

At Don Bosco, some of the battles in practice are more physical than ones in matches. Chakonis doesn't take it easy on Acciardi, despite having a significant weight advantage on his teammate and training partner. In one matchup, Acciar-

di even took a punch to the face.

"I've known Pete since like third grade, so we go way back," Chakonis said. "He knows that if I go after him in practice, it's not me trying to beat him up. It's my trying to get him [better]."

Chakonis, a returning state champion, looked the part of a top seed. He secured the championship with four consecutive pins, with the first two coming in less than a minute.

"I know I don't look it, but I'm pretty fast out there," Chakonis said with a smile. "So I've been trying to use my speed."

In the 285-pound final, Chakonis pinned Brian Sidle of St. Joseph at 2:44 to earn the championship and end his own long wait.

"I've never won it," Chakonis said. "This is something special. It's something to hang on my wall."

