

**PENNSYLVANIA**  
**WRESTLING**  
**NEWSMAGAZINE**



Levi Haines (157) of PSU (Biglerville) and Carter Starocci (174) (Erie Prep) are the only two native Pennsylvanians to win NCAA titles.

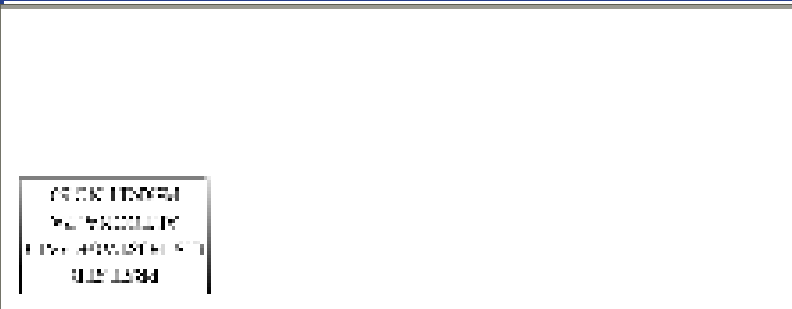
**TWO PA NATIVE NCAA CHAMPS: LEVI HAINES & CARTER STAROCCI**



Rocco Welsh, left, (Waynesburg HS) of Ohio St. and Trent Hidlay, above, (Mifflin County HS) of NC State were the other two PA natives to make the finals. Welsh lost to Starocci at 174 and Hidlay was defeated by Brooks at 197. Hidlay becomes a 2x finalist and ends his senior year 28-1.



Aaron Brooks and Carter Starocci became the 6th and 7th individuals to win NCAA titles in the same year & the first 4-Timers in Penn State history!  
*PSU photos by Mark Selders*



# Nittany Lion Notes From the NCAAs

compiled by Joe Baranik

- The Lions pushed six wrestlers into the finals to set a school record. Four of the six won gold including: Haines, Starocci, Brooks and Kerkvliet. Beau Bartlett (141) & Mitchell Mesenbrink (165) were runners-up, and were close to winning. The other All-Americans were Tyler Kasak (3rd) at 149 and Bernie Truax (5th) at 184. True freshman Braeden Davis (125), who was seeded #1 after winning the BIG title, went 2-2 and was one match from earning AA honors. Aaron Nagao (133), went 3-2 and also was one win shy of AA status.
- Starocci (174) (Erie Prep) became the sixth wrestler and Brooks (197), became the seventh to win 4 NCAA titles since the tournament started in 1928. They become the first wrestlers from PSU to win 4, and the first teammates in history to win their 4th title the same year. Starocci has a career record of 78-2 if you count contested bouts. He has 2 losses on medical forfeits. His two losses occurred his freshman year vs. Donnell Washington of Indiana in a dual and a Big 10 finals loss to Michael Kemerer of Iowa.
- Interestingly enough, their coach, Cael Sanderson, became the 2nd wrestler to win 4 NCAA titles 22 years earlier. Coach Cael becomes the only coach to lead a wrestler to 4 titles
- Haines & Starocci produced shutouts in the finals, Brooks won 6-1, and Kerkvliet won by maj. decision.
- PSU produced 8 All-Americans to tie a school record and won their 3rd straight NCAA Team title.
- The Blue & White set an all-time high in scoring 172.5 points, breaking Iowa coach Dan Gable's record of 170.5, earned in 1997.
- Another record by the Nittany Lions was the 100 point margin between first and 2nd place. If you add the second place team, Cornell's points, and Michigan's 3rd place team points together, they still don't reach PSU's total of 172.5 points!
- Sophomore Haines (157), and senior Kerkvliet (285) won their first NCAA titles. Kerkvliet dominated #10 seed Lucas Davison of Michigan 13-4 in the finals and ended the national tournament 5-0, with 2 MD and a TF to become a 4x AA. #1 seed Haines, a 2x BIG champion, has not lost since he was a runner-up last year, to Austin O'Connor of UNC. He took down #2 seed Jacori Teemer of Arizona State 5-0. Haines earned a MD, 2 TF and a pin to become a 2x AA.
- Bartlett (141) beat #1 seed Jesse Mendez of Ohio State in their dual during the season, and Mendez returned the favor in the BIG finals. In the NCAA finals, Bartlett hit a nice duck under to get behind Mendez for the winning takedown, but when he lifted him to the mat, Mendez surprised him with a slick granby roll to earn the final takedown, and the win, with about six seconds left on the clock.
- Mesenbrink (165), a redshirt freshman, and former NCAA champ David Carr, were tied 8-8 with under a minute to wrestle. Carr was called twice for stalling. Mesenbrink pushed the pace, but didn't realize he was losing because Carr had a riding time point. He figured he would go into OT. Carr won 9-8 on RT. M&M won 26 straight before losing in the finals.
- Tyler Kasak (149) (Bethlehem Catholic), the #7 seed went 7-1 at the nationals as a true freshman, and placed 3rd with 4 maj. decisions and a pin along the way. He finished the year 24-5. He is only the 9th wrestler in NCAA history to lose his 1st match and fight back to win 7 straight. He is the second wrestler at Penn State- John Lange did it back in 1998. Kasak beat #1 seed Ridge Lovett of Nebraska 10-1 to move into the 3rd place bout. He beat #5 seed and true freshman Ty Watters (West Allegheny) of WVU, another true freshman, 3-2, to take the bronze...**PSU NOTES CONTINUED ON PAGE 17**

## PWN CELEBRATES 29 YEARS!



Editor...Joe Baranik, Graham HS Head Coach

Design/Layout...Troy Baranik, Columbia College, SC - Sports Info. Director

All PSU photos by Mark Selders,  
HS photos by Marc Billett

## Highlights from the NCAA Wrestling Championships

**The NCAA Div. I Wrestling Championships were held March 21-23 at the T-Mobile Center in Kansas City, Missouri—"The Show Me" State.** Well, Penn State showed the country how dominant of a team they had, with breaking more records than Coach Cael, Carter Starocci and Aaron Brooks have NCAA titles! Four was their lucky number as they produced 4 champions, and two of their stars, Starocci and Brooks became the 6th and 7th four-time NCAA champions in the history of Div. I. **"The Significant 7" include:** Pat Smith (Oklahoma St.), Cael Sanderson (Iowa St.), Kyle Dake (Cornell), Logan Stieber (Ohio St.), Yani Diakomihalis (Cornell), Starocci (PSU) and Brooks (PSU). How cool is that their coach who has won 4, now coaches those two, to 4 titles?

**The Lions pushed a school record six to the finals** and also developed two runners-up in Beau Bartlett (141) and freshman Mitchell Mesenbrink (165). All four champions including Levi Haines (157) (Biglerville), who won the silver last year, won handily in the finals. #1 seed Haines defeated #2 Jacori Teemeer, 5-0, Starocci won 2-0 and was never in trouble, even as I would guess, at 70% capacity. The first four letters in his name, do tell it all! Brooks (197) looked at ease with a 6-1 victory over PA native Trent Hidlay of NC State, who was the #2 seed, and had an unblemished record. Greg Kerkvliet (285) who led off the tournament, as the NCAA elected to start at this weight class, was unstoppable in winning 13-4 for his first title. He becomes a 4x AA.

**Penn State Records:** \*First school to have two, 4x NCAA champions, in the same year \*Most team points (172.5) ever \*Largest point differential from the second place team (100) \*School record six in finals \*Tied a school record 8 All-Americans \* First school to have four nominees on the Hodge Trophy vote \*First school to have a Hodge Trophy Winner along with their coach

**Coach Cael Sanderson**, who is the only college wrestler to go 159-0 and win 4 NCAA titles for Coach Bobby Douglas at Iowa State, to now have coached two of his protégés to four NCAA crowns 22 years later, on the exact date, is amazing.

**Mitch Mesenbrink, "Philosopher":** Many of the Great Greek philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle were wrestlers. Add M&M to the group. To paraphrase what Mitchell told Shane Sparks of the BIG Network, my value doesn't lie in winning or losing. Now I can go back and work on the things I need to work on, because I worked as hard as I could. According to Basic Blues Nation, a day later, he said on social media; "It's not about the one you didn't get, it's about the one you're going to get." "A roof is a man-made thing, and there is no lid to FLY."



**Mitchell Mesenbrink (165) Penn State**

**Lehigh Produced 3 All-Americans:** The Mountain Hawks had two freshman and a junior become AA, as #2 seed Ryan Crookham (133) (Saucon Valley) placed 3rd, true freshman #2 seed Luke Stanich (125), placed 5th, and Michael Beard (197) (Malvern Prep) a junior placed 8th, to help Lehigh to a 15th place team finish. Crookham becomes the 10 and Stanich the 11th freshman All-Americans in program history. Crookham, an EIWA champion was named EIWA Freshman of the Year as he went 23-1. His only loss of the year was against Vito Agujau of Cornell in the NCAA semifinals, a reigning World Champion and 2x NCAA titlist who Crookham had beaten twice during the season.

**Lock Haven University's Anthony Noto** placed 3rd at the NCAA's after finishing 4th a year ago. He became LHU's 11th multi All-American. Noto, a junior, went 5-1 at nationals at 125 lbs. after only being seeded No. 12. Noto beat No. 4 seed Matt Ramos of Purdue 4-1 (SV) to move to the semifinals before losing 4-3 to Richard Figueroa of Arizona State. Figueroa went onto win the title. For his efforts, Noto was named MAC Wrestler of the Year for the second straight year. He finished the season with a 22-3 mark and a career record of 87-10.

**Peyton Robb (157) of Nebraska** placed 7th to become a 4x AA. One year ago, he was in the hospital with a life threatening bacteria eating infection. After six surgeries, and two months in the hospital, he was healed.

**Parker Keckeisen of Northern Iowa**, who went unbeaten during the season and won the NCAA title at 184 lbs., was giving his teammates chest bumps after his victory and also gave ESPN mat side reporter Quint Kessenich a chest bump before he interviewed him.

**Neil Erisman, the head coach at Little Rock Arkansas was named the NWCA Coach of the Year.** The Trojans went 15-5 on the season and defeated Arizona State and Oregon State in duals, while producing their first two All-Americans. Little Rock also finished in the top 20 as a team at the NCAAs. It is only the fifth season that the school has had a wrestling program and the first school to start a Div. I program from scratch in 23 years.

**NCAA Awards:** **Aaron Brooks** won most Dominant Wrestler of the Year and Outstanding Wrestler of the Championships.

**Wyatt Hendrickson**, heavyweight, from Air Force earned the Most Falls for the Year with 16, while **Michael Beard** of Lehigh earned the Most Tech Falls for the Year with 17 at 197 lbs.

**Super Stats:** Penn State went a Whopping 45-9 with their 10 wrestlers at the NCAAs. Back in 1997, Iowa went 43-10. The Lions are (40-3) in the semifinals and (29-11) in the finals since 2016. Since Coach Sanderson arrived at Penn State in 2010 there have been 14 NCAA tournaments (2020, no tourn). His teams has won every NCAA Championship except 2010 (9th), 2015 (6th) and 2021 (2nd) = Greatness!

## WPIAL Report: Hall of Fame

By **PAUL SCHOFIELD**

### Four inducted into SW HOF

Before he started as a full-time sports writer out of college in 1980, Paul Schofield's exposure to high school wrestling was minimal.

As a kid, he remembers watching the state finals on WQED-TV, hearing about far-away places such as Tyrone or Shikellamy or Shickshinny and wondering what they were like.

When he graduated from Frazier in 1976, the school didn't have a wrestling team. While a student at California State College, he remembered seeing national champion wrestler Bill DePaoli jogging around campus at all hours of the day and night to make sure he made weight.

When he started at the Connellsville Daily Courier in 1980 — Schofield covered the PIAA wrestling championships for the first time in 1981 — Connellsville, Mt. Pleasant and Southmoreland had good teams, so, to do his job well, he had to learn about the sport.

He picked the brain of legendary Falcons coach Tom Dolde. He listened to the radio broadcast team of Kevin Harrison, Sully Gambone and Don Lynn while watching matches so he could learn the moves.

He quickly got the hang of it, and, more than four decades later, Schofield is one of the most respected writers covering Pennsylvania high school wrestling.

On Saturday night, he will be inducted into the Southwestern Pennsylvania Hall of Fame during the Pittsburgh Wrestling Classic festivities at Peters Township.

"It's something you never expect, but it's neat to be honored by your peers, coaches and former wrestlers that I've covered," Schofield said.

Schofield said some of his favorite stories have involved underdogs rising up and doing something extraordinary, such as winning a state championship.

At the risk of forgetting someone he would have liked to mention, he rattled off a list of athletes whose amazing accomplishments he chronicled.

Recent Westmoreland County greats such as Franklin Regional's Nico Megaludis and Michael Kemmerer and Norwin's Kurtis Phipps. Four-time state champs such as Jefferson-Morgan's Cary Kolat, Derry's Jimmy Gulibon and Frazier's Rune Lawrence.

"And (Lawrence) happens to be from my alma mater. He's stolen my thunder," Schofield joked.

Schofield does not have a hard time singling out the best high school wrestler he's ever covered.

"#1 would be Spencer Lee," he said. "What a super kid he is, a great individual."

Schofield especially remembers telling the story of the time the Franklin Regional grad, when he was in eighth grade, decided to challenge his mother, a former Olympian, to see if her jiu-jitsu game was still strong, "She tapped him out," Schofield said with a laugh.

Since starting at the Tribune-Review in 1995, Schofield has covered 30 state tournaments. At least one Westmoreland County wrestler has brought home gold from all 30.

Needless to say, Schofield has seen dramatic changes in the sport. He saw the power in PIAA wrestling shift from the eastern half of the state to the west. Within the WPIAL, he's seen the hotbeds move from Washington and Greene counties to Westmoreland and Fayette counties.

"The sport has changed," he said. "A lot of the moves haven't, but it's changed. Kids are stronger nowadays. They're in better shape, for the most part, and the cream comes to the top."

Schofield is one of four inductees in the Class of 2024, joining Matt Lebe, Ken Hackman and Jim Akerly.

Lebe, the head coach at Franklin Regional, was a three-time WPIAL champion and three-time PIAA medalist at Jeannette. He went 132-10, won two EWL titles and was an NCAA All-American in 2005 for West Virginia.

Hackman, a 1984 Derry graduate, went 95-23-2 in high school, winning a WPIAL title and placing third in the state as a senior. He went 101-10 and won two national titles at Cal (Pa.). He coached at Derry from 1994 to 2000.

Akerly, the founder of Quest School of Wrestling in Washington, won 119 matches at West Virginia and was an All-American in 1987 before becoming a successful college coach.

### WPIAL Wrestlers of the Year

TribLive announced their Wrestlers of the Year. They feature three PIAA champions and a first.

Let's meet the winners.

### Girls Wrestler of the Year

**Valarie Solorio**, Canon-McMillan, Sr., 100 lbs--2023-24 record: 17-0; Career record: 117-5

Canon-McMillan senior Valarie Solorio likes to be the first. She collected a lot of firsts this season. Being that this was the PIAA's inaugural season of girls wrestling and that Solorio competes in the lightest weight class (100 pounds), she was naturally going to be a first in many things.

She was the first girl to win WPIAL, PIAA Western Regional and PIAA titles. She also is TribLive's first Girls Wrestler of the Year.

"I fell in love with the sport while attending my brother's practices," Solorio said. "I decided to start wrestling and my parents had a rule that if you started something you don't quit during the season. I didn't realize I'd be that good."

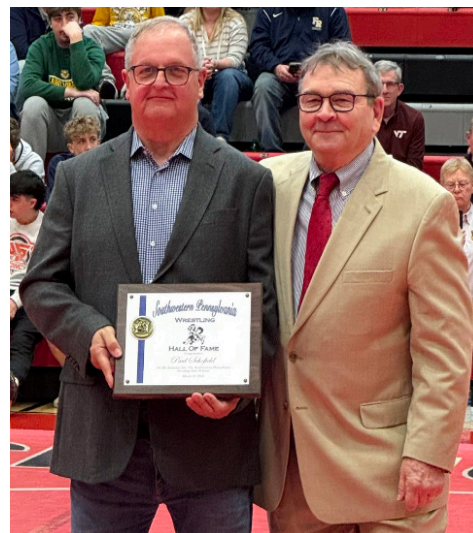
Solorio said she loved wrestling in front of big crowds. It will prepare her for when she wrestles for the University of Iowa next season. Solorio's senior season was hampered by a knee injury, but she healed enough to compete in the postseason. After she pinned her opponent in the finals, she slapped the mat three times and then got up and blew kisses to the crowd.

"It was a reaction thing," Solorio said. "I love blowing kisses. It was exciting to be the first champion. It's something that will be never taken away from me."

"I'm honored to be the first Wrestler of the Year. I worked hard over the years and my hard work paid off."

She also led Canon-McMillan's team to the first PIAA girls team championship.

*Pictured: Paul Schofield (Left), is presented the HOF plaque by Ron Frank.*



By **PAUL SCHOFIELD**

*continued from page 4*

## Pittsburgh Wrestling Classic

At the 50th annual Pittsburgh Wrestling Classic on March 30 at Peters Township, the crowd patiently waited for the long-awaited rematch between Frazier's Rune Lawrence and Max Shulaw, a two-time Ohio state champion from St. Francis DeSales.

When Shulaw and Lawrence met at the Ironman Tournament in December, Lawrence hurt his knee on what many saw as a questionable move by Shulaw.

"Getting my hand raised was all that mattered to me," Lawrence said. "I wasn't trying to do anything fancy out there. Although I did check his body lock in the beginning and tried a takedown to stick him."

Halfway through the 215-pound match, Lawrence said he took an incidental knee to the head from Shulaw, which staggered him, and he had to be looked at by the medical personnel. But he was able to get back in and secure a 6-3 victory.

The Pennsylvania All-Stars lost to the United States All-Stars, 27-12.

The meet between the WPIAL All-Stars and the New Jersey All-Stars was a spirited affair, with the WPIAL team winning 27-19. Four of the matches were paused because of blood being drawn on part of the Jersey All-Stars.

Franklin Regional's Tyler Kapusta, a Bucknell commit, got the WPIAL team on the board with a 4-3 win at 121 pounds. After the WPIAL lost two consecutive matches, Hempfield's Eli Carr gave the lead back to the WPIAL All-Stars with a 12-2 major decision at 152 pounds against Jeremy Quezada. Carr, a WPIAL champion in 3A, tried to pin Quezada to begin the match but was unsuccessful.

"To me, pinning is the goal of wrestling, and that's what I tried to do," said Carr. "I gave up a takedown and just tried to stay in good position," he said. "I'm pretty comfortable when I'm giving up that cradle. I knew if I just stayed in good position and had my head up, I'd get him."

"I love wrestling in front of big crowds, the goal is to have fun and entertain," he said. "I love being able to hang with my friends, who are also on the team, and it's great to be a part of this tradition and to be at the 50th is pretty special."

On the girls side, the Pennsylvania All-Stars lost to the Ohio All-Stars, 39-19. In the opening match, Butler senior Ana Malovich won an 11-2 major decision

over Addison Rudolph from Central Crossing High School at 118 pounds.

Malovich, a PIAA runner up and WPIAL champion, opened the first round with a solid takedown of Rudolph. Then, Malovich struck quickly in the second round, securing another takedown, lifting Rudolph into the air and driving her to the mat.

## Pittsburgh Wrestler of the Year:

**Rune Lawrence**, Frazier, Sr., 215 pounds--2023-24 record: 33-1; Career record: 145-8

Winning four PIAA wrestling titles is not common. When Frazier senior Rune Lawrence completed the task March 9, he became only the 14th wrestler to achieve such a goal. He also is the seventh WPIAL wrestler to do it. Lawrence dominated Muncy's Austin Johnson, 6-3, in the finals. The final score was closer than the match indicated as Johnson didn't attempt to escape and wrestle against Lawrence on his feet. Lawrence landed a back flip after his win and earned Class 2A Outstanding Wrestler honors.

He also is the TribLive Wrestler of the Year. The West Virginia commit then competed in the Pittsburgh Classic.

"For anybody who thought that it was going to be a close match, it wasn't," Lawrence said. "I pretty much dominated. Winning four titles feels great. It's a goal I set when I was a freshman. I envisioned myself getting my hand raised for years. This has been a dream of mine and it became reality. It's quite an honor."

Lawrence's senior season was dampened by a knee injury that occurred during the Ironman Tournament. Not being able to compete for the title ended up being the only loss on his record. The injury kept him out for more than a month.

"I know Rune wanted to win Ironman and Powerade," Frazier coach Buck Watkins said. "The injury prevented that. I'm so proud of what he and his brother (Thayne) have accomplished. It was an honor to coach them."

Thayne Lawrence was a two-time PIAA champion and a four-time WPIAL champion like his younger brother. They are the first brothers to each win four WPIAL titles.

## Westmoreland Wrestler of the Year:

**Landon Sidun**, Norwin, Fr., 114 pounds  
2023-24 record: 42-2

Landon Sidun was well known even before he wrestled his first high school match. He was being touted as the next superstar. The freshman didn't disappoint.

Sidun bounced back from a loss in the WPIAL Class 3A finals to win his first PIAA title at 114 pounds on March 9. He also claimed gold at Fargo Nationals, Super 32 and Powerade.

However, he made his name at the Beast of the East tournament. He dropped a close bout and then bounced two state champions to finish third. A week later, he won the Powerade title, which vaulted him to No. 1 in the country at his weight class.

"The Beast of the East and Powerade tournaments set up the rest of the season," Sidun said. "I know I was favored, but I wasn't nervous. I didn't let things bother me."

Sidun also kept a streak of 30 consecutive years that Westmoreland County has had a state champion. For his effort, he was named Trib Westmoreland Wrestler of the Year. He beat out Franklin Regional's Ty Kapusta and Hempfield's Eli Carr for the award.


Sidun wouldn't mind emulating Frazier's Rune Lawrence, who this season became the 14th wrestler in the state to become a four-time champion.

It wasn't easy. Sidun had to maneuver through a tough field. He defeated Ridley junior Ricky Nelson, 6-3, in the state finals.

"I'd like to reach that milestone, but right now, I'm working on winning the next one," Sidun said. "I'm thinking one at a time. I work every day to get better. When I lost in the WPIAL finals, I was glad the state tournament was the next week."

Norwin coach Kyle Martin added: "He doesn't let pressure get to him. He actually thrives on it. He's always working hard on getting better. He responds well."

**Watch the best wrestlers in the country, state and WPIAL**



**1975-2024**  
★ 50TH ANNIVERSARY ★

**PITTSBURGH**

**WRESTLING CLASSIC**

Presented by  
U.S. Steel

**SATURDAY, MARCH 30, 2024**

## Lehigh Valley / District 11 Report

**By: Dave Crowell**



Technically the 2023-24 PIAA wrestling season drew to a close when the 285-pound wrestlers received their medals and the champions had their photos taken in the Giant Center in Hershey in mid-March.

The “unofficial” end to the season is still in the process of closing its final curtain. All-star matches have been held, weight class rankings have been adjusted and banquets are in being planned along with other events.

The 40th Easton Lions Club Wrestling Classic was held at Easton Area High School on March 14th. The first ELCWC was held in March of 1981. This annual event (minus a few years due to Covid19 restrictions) pits a District 11 senior all-star team against its counterpart across the Delaware River in New Jersey. District 11 won this year’s contest 19-15 and leads the overall series 27-14. D11 contestants included: Aiden Gruber (Lehighton/113 [W]); Blake Dergham (Parkland/119 [W]); Dominic Rizzotto (Nazareth/132 [L]); Ben Finelli (Easton/132 [W]); Jaron Trimmer (Easton/144 [L]); Seth Pascoe (Whitehall/150 [L]); James Geiger (Easton/165[W/OutstandingWrestler]); Auggie Warke (Schuylkill Haven/190 [W]); Brandon Stiehler (Pocono Mountain West/215 [W]).

However, the match that easily had the most interest was not even a scheduled one. Robert Bibeau (East Stroudsburg North) who had traveled well over an hour from his home in northern Monroe County was scheduled to wrestle Phillipsburg,

NJ’s Liam Packer at 175 pounds. Unfortunately, Packer was unable to make it back from a college visit in time for the match. Delaware Valley, NJ wrestler Kevin Roman happened to be in the stands to cheer on his four teammates who WERE scheduled to wrestle. After a VERY last minute invitation, Roman literally walked out of the bleachers cold, changed into an “already worn (and sweaty) DV singlet” and competed in the final (albeit unofficial) bout of the evening. Roman delighted the New Jersey crown by securing a fall though it was not counted in the final team score.

Two District 11 wrestlers competed in the 50th Pittsburgh Wrestling Classic held at Peters Township High School in McMurray, PA just south of Pittsburgh. The USA all-stars downed the PA all-star squad 27-12. At 114 pounds, nationally #2 ranked Ayden Smith (Notre Dame Green Pond) was one of only four PA wrestlers who were victorious. Smith defeated #20 Abram Cline (CA) 3-1. #7 Sean Kinney (Nazareth) was decisioned 4-0 by #5 Koy Hopke (WI). Smith will continue his academic and wrestling career at Rutgers University. Kinney wrestled the last match of his career as he will play football at Lafayette College. Of interest was that University of Wisconsin head wrestling coach Chris Bono was honored as a former participant in the PWC. He was the keynote speaker for the PWC banquet Friday night. In 1992 Bono wrestled to a 4-4 draw with Cary Kolat and remains the most-watched PWC match of all time on YouTube.

The annual District 11 Wrestling Hall of Fame/Scholar-Athlete Banquet will be held on April 14th at the Steel Club in Hellertown, PA. Six individuals will be inducted into the 2024 class of the DXI Wrestling Hall of Fame. This group includes: the late Mikey Racciato

(Pen Argyl) who was a three-time state champion for the Green Knights and who passed away on Christmas Day 2020; 1993 Nazareth graduate Adam Colombo who coached the Blue Eagles for 29 years before retiring last year; John Handlovic who was a state champion for Wilson in 1983; Troy Handlovic who also won a state championship for

Wilson a year later in 1884; Joe McIntyre who officiated for 23 years working five state tournaments before retiring last year; Mark Cesari who won two state titles for North Schuylkill (1988 & 1989) and was a PIAA official for many years.

The District 11 Wrestling Coaches Association will also recognize and honor D11 schools’ wrestling scholar-athletes at the same event. Each school is asked to submit the “resume” of its top senior wrestler. A committee reviews the wrestling accomplishments, academic achievement and community service of each school’s top senior wrestler. The committee is then tasked with choosing the top AA and AAA student-athlete in D11 and will award each winner with a scholarship. In addition, all school’s nominees are awarded a plaque recognizing this honor.

In addition to his coaching duties, Dave serves as a coaching consultant conducting seminars, clinics, consultations, and leadership training for all athletic coaching staffs as well as wrestling coaches specifically. He also serves as the National Wrestling Coaches Association resident coaching consultant and is busy facilitating the NWCA Scholastic Coaches Academy

*Dave Crowell, head wrestling coach at Nazareth Area H.S. You can contact Dave Crowell directly via email at [dcrowell@rcn.com](mailto:dcrowell@rcn.com) or visit him on the web at [coachingbeyondthevictory.com](http://coachingbeyondthevictory.com).*



**Sienna Steeber of Belle Vernon Won the Scholar Athlete Award for Westmoreland County**

**Right: Keanu Dillard of Beth. Catholic defeated Tyler Kapusta (Franklin Regional) 3-1 (OT) in PIAA State Finals at 121 lbs.**





**HOSS'S**  
• FAMILY •  
**STEAK & SEA**

**A Proud Supporter of  
Pennsylvania Wrestling**

**www.hosss.com**  
**1.800.900.4677**

**Real Good People Serving Real American Food!**



**\$10 OFF \$40**  
**PRESENT THIS VOUCHER &**  
**RECEIVE \$10 OFF \$40 PURCHASE!**

Dine-in Only. Tax & Gratuity Not Included. Cannot Be Combined With Any Other Discount or Promotion.  
Not valid on gift card purchases. Only one voucher per guest check. Must Present Upon Ordering.  
No Photo Copies Accepted. Valid at participating Hoss's. Exp: March 31, 2024.

## District 3 H.S. Report

By Bill Creps



Another PIAA State Championship is in the books. The action was fast and furious. It was wonderful to add the girls to the best wrestling tournament in the

country. Below is my unique way of analyzing the 2024 tournament.

**\*Twice is Nice** – These grapplers earned their second state title 2A: Notre Dame’s Ayden Smith (114), Faith Christian’s Adam Waters (172); 3A: Daniel Boone’s Tucker Hogan (189), Central Mountain’s Luke Simcox (145), Bethlehem Catholic’s Kollin Rath (152), and Keanu Dillard (121)

**Twice is Nice but Trips are better:** These grapplers join a unique groups of PA grapplers winning their third state championship: 3A: Nazareth’s Sean Kinney (285); 2A: Northern Lebanon’s Aaron Seidel (121), Montgomery’s Conner Harer (160).

**Three Championships are great but 4 Crowns are the best:** Congratulations to Frazier’s Rue Lawrence on his 4th title. He finished his career with an outstanding 145-8 with 102 fall and 9 tech falls. This year’s record was 33-1 with 29 falls and 21 first period falls.

**\* NO REPEAT** – These grapplers were unable to secure a second title 2A: FCA’s Gauge Botero, Burrell’s Cooper Hornack, Muncy’s Austin Johnson, Quakertown’s Collin Gaj, Central Mountain’s Dalton Perry, State College’s Pierson Manville.

**\*Undeclared Wrestlers** – 2A FCA’s Joey Bachman (31-0), Montgomery’s Brandt Harer (53-0) and Conner Harer (54-0), Bishop McCort’s Bo Bassett (55-0), Central Valley’s Brennan Morgan (42-0); 3A: Daniel Boone’s Tucker Hogan (48-0) and Owen J. Robert’s Dillon Bechtold (41-0).

**\*Undeclared to the Very Last Match-** These grapplers were undefeated until the state finals; 2A: Chestnut Ridge’s Dominick Deputy (48-1), and Southern Columbia’s Garrett Garcia (33-2).

**\*Junior State Champions** – 2A:

Northern Lebanon’s Aaron Seidel; 3A: Thomas Jefferson’s Maddox Shaw, Bethlehem Catholic’s Kollin Rath (2x), State College’s Asher Cummingham, Pine- Richland’s Vaughn Spencer, Nazareth’s Tahir Parkins.

**\*Super Sophomore State Champions:**

2A: FCA’s Adam Waters(2x), Montgomery’s Brandt Harer, Bishop McCort’s Bo Bassett, and Jax Forrest, Warrior Run’s Reagan Milheim 3A: Bethlehem Catholic’s Keanu Dillard (2x), and Northampton’s Trey Wagner.

**\*Fantastic Freshman:** 2A: FCA’s Joey Bachman, Bishop McCort’s Melvin Miller; 3A: Hatboro Horsham’s Dominik Morrison, and Norwin’s Linden Sidun.

**\*4-time State Place winners:** 2A: Burrell’s Cooper Hornack (2-4-1-6), Notre Dame’s Ayden Smith (-4-3-1-1), Bentworth’s Chris Vargo (3-5-2-2), Southern Columbia’s Mason Barvitski (6-4-5-2), Frazier’s Rue Lawrence (1-1-1-1); 3A: Manheim Twp. Kaedyn Williams (1-3-4-3), Central Mountain’s Luke Simcox (5-5-1-1), Nazareth’s Sean Kinney (2-1-1-1).

**\*Feelin like the 1st time** – This school won their first PIAA state championships this year: This school doesn’t sponsor wrestling but one of its students was a State Champion through a co-op agreement. Congratulations to Williamsburg and Andrew McMonagle who wrestled for Huntingdon. He also had 37 falls this year which may be the most in the state.

### 2A Championship Observations

Every state champion earns the same gold medal, and most champions win four bouts to be the champion, but the pathway to the finals is not always equal. Some champions wrestle a more difficult group of grapplers to be the champion like Rue Lawrence who defeated four opponents who all earned state medals. He defeated the 2nd, 6th, 7th, and 8th place wrestlers to be the champion. Of course, one of his victories was over Muncy’s Austin Johnson, a previous state champion, at 215 lbs. Two other champions, Notre Dame’s Ayden Smith, and Montgomery’s Brandt Harer each won matches against the 2nd, 3rd and 4th place

winners which was not an easy path. Some wrestlers only meet two place winners on their route to the championship.

**He did What?** Several years ago, Athen’s Brian Courtney beat 3 previous state champions to win his crown an event not repeated since. However, Bishop McCort’s Lincoln Sledzianowski wrestled three previous state champions this year in his bracket. The first state champion, Northern’s Lebanon’s Aaron Seidel defeated Lincoln 13-0 in the semifinals, then in the next round-consolation semifinals he squared off with FCA’s returning state champion Gauge Botero and defeated him (2-1). In his consolation finals bout, he defeated Reynold’s Louie Gill (7-5) who was a state champion for Hickory as a freshman. He defeated two previous state champions and only finished 3rd in his weight class.

**109** – The number of matches the Montgomery Harer brothers won this year without a loss. 109-0.

The SW 2A region ruled the 127 lbs. weight class as they placed 4 wrestlers in the top five. Forrest -1st, Vargo-2nd, Fanella -3rd and Bracken-5th. That’s weight class domination.

Bishop McCort’s **Bo Bassett** performance was outstanding at the state championships. He finished 56-0 and crushed all his opponents. But did you know he owns a victory over Central Mountain’s 2x state champion Luke Simcox. Bassett defeated him 10-3 in the finals of Powerade. Bassett finished the year 56-0, with 32 tech falls, 18 falls, 3 forfeits and only 2 bouts that finished with a regular decision (Simcox 10-3 and Omar Ayoub (Ohio) 5-1).

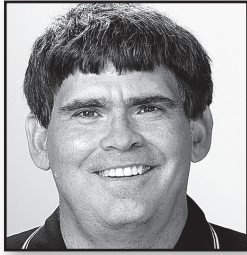
FCA’s Adam Waters completely dominated his 172 lbs. weight class as he earned his second gold medal. He collected 3 tech falls (17-1, 16-0, 15-0) and a regular fall in 1:41.

My streak of attending the PIAA state championship was stopped several years ago, because of Covid, but I can say I watched my 49th state championship in a row!



## District 6 Report

By John Hartsock



*jhartsock@altoonamirror.com*

District 6 boys wrestlers enjoyed more than their share of laurels at the PIAA Class 3A and Class 2A state tournaments,

held March 7 through 9 at Hershey's Giant Center.

Bishop McCort of Johnstown wrapped up a stellar season, finishing second in the Class 2A state team tournament standings with 151 team points – the third most ever in tournament history – and crowning three individual champions in sophomores Jax Forrest (127 pounds) and Bo Bassett (139), and freshman Melvin Miller (152).

Senior Andrew McMonagle, who was forced to leave the 2023 Class 2A state tournament after suffering a first-round injury, gamely battled back this year to win the 189-pound state championship while competing for Huntingdon Area High School.

In Class 3A, Central Mountain senior Luke Simcox won his second straight state championship, capturing the gold medal at 145 pounds, while State College junior Asher Cunningham won the state title at 160 pounds.

### *What follows is a closer look:*

#### **McCort Trio Wins Gold**

After enduring a two-year probation imposed by the PIAA for illegal recruiting, the Bishop McCort wrestling program bounced back with a vengeance this winter, winning District 6 and Southwest Class 2A Regional Tournament team championships, and finishing second to District 1 powerhouse Faith Christian (167 points) in the Class 2A state tournament team race.

Bassett capped off a perfect 56-0 season by winning the 139-pound state championship with a 21-6, 4:55 technical fall over Littlestown's Cameron Minge.

Bassett has distinguished himself in the national as well as state level of competition.

"I want to dominate, set records, and be the guy that people can look up to and remember just because of my style and how I wrestled," Bassett said in an

interview with WTAJ-TV of Altoona after winning his state championship.

"For me, I stay motivated and hungry, because I'm not just trying to win states, I want to be the best ever," Bassett added.

Another sophomore, Forrest, captured the 127-pound state title with a 15-0, 4:32 technical fall over Bentworth's Chris Vargo, who had decisioned Forrest, 13-7, in their Southwest Class 2A Regional Tournament championship bout a week before.

"It's awesome," Forrest, who carded a record of 53-2 this season, said of winning the state title. "That's what we work for."

Miller, a freshman, got his very promising high school career off to an excellent start by topping Faith Academy's Max Stein, 2-1, in the 152-pound Class 2A championship bout.

Miller posted a gaudy 57-3 record this year en route to state, regional and district championships.

"Our coaches preach to us to be the best in the world," Miller said. "No one outworks us, and that's just what we do every day on a daily basis. No one does it like we do."

McCort coach Howard Forrest said that his wrestlers are up to the task.

"I think that they all have such great attitudes, and they love the sport," Howard Forrest said.

McCort also placed three other wrestlers among the top eight in their weight classes at the state tournament. Lincoln Sledzianowski (121 pounds) and Devin Magro (160) both took third places, while senior Mason Gibson, who has committed to wrestle for Penn State, captured fourth place at 133.

#### **McMonagle Bounces Back**

The 2023 Class 2A state tournament was a tough one for McMonagle, a student at tiny Williamsburg High School who competed in a wrestling co-op with neighboring Huntingdon because Williamsburg does not have a wrestling program.

McMonagle suffered extensive damage to ligaments in his knee during his first match at last season's state tournament, and was forced to withdraw from the tournament.

After undergoing a very thorough rehabilitation program last offseason, McMonagle – who is also an outstanding

football player – returned to the wrestling mats this winter, and reeled off 47 victories and a Class 2A state championship at 189 pounds.

McMonagle overcame a 6-3 third-period deficit to top previously-unbeaten Garrett Garcia of Southern Columbia, 8-7, in the state title match.

McMonagle said that he used last season's setback as motivation this year.

"It gave me a lot of drive all this year," McMonagle said. "I attacked my rehab program and tried to get back out on the mat as soon as possible.

"It was always in the back of my mind to win it all this year," McMonagle added. "That was my goal since the end of last year – to go win a state title this year."

McMonagle won his match with Garcia by scoring a takedown with about a minute left after scoring an escape and takedown earlier in the third period to tie the bout.

"It was just a fun match, and a close match," McMonagle said. "My adrenalin was pumping the whole time. It felt pretty good to win."

McMonagle will continue his wrestling career on the NCAA Division I level at North Dakota State next year. North Dakota State is a member of the Big 12 Conference in wrestling, which includes traditional college powerhouse Oklahoma State, as well as Oklahoma, Missouri, and Navy.

#### **Simcox Wins Again**

In the PIAA Class 3A state tournament, Central Mountain's Simcox won his second straight state title, capturing the 145-pound crown with a thrilling 4-1 tiebreaker 2 victory over State College standout Pierson Manville.

Simcox, who won the 133-pound state championship last season, scored an escape and takedown in the tiebreaker session to defeat Manville, an Arizona State University wrestling commit who won a state championship at 139 pounds two years ago as a sophomore, and finished second at 139 pounds last season as a junior.

Simcox said that his second state championship means more to him than his first, for a couple of reasons.

**continued on page 13**

# **SPORT CAMPS**

Experience the excitement of Penn State wrestling camps!

Improve your performance on the mat with unmatched technical instruction, live wrestling, competitions, and an individual tournament. Come train with the best camp staff in the nation to become the best wrestler you can be!

**2024 Camps:**

**Team Camp** June 26-29

**Technique Camp** June 30-July 3

**For more information, contact:**

Penn State Sport Camps  
Gardner House, Elm Road  
University Park, PA 16802  
Phone: 814-865-0561  
Email: SportCampInfo@psu.edu



In accordance with NCAA guidelines, all Penn State University Sport Camps and Clinics are open to any and all entrants, limited only by specified number, age, grade level and/or gender of its participants.



[GoPSUsports.com/camps](https://GoPSUsports.com/camps)

**WRESTLING**



We offer graphic design, banners, posters, media guides, booklets, brochures, year-books, flyer's, tickets, business card magnets and so much more! Call us with your next printing project to see how we can help you.

**(814) 944-3057**

**200 W. 14th Avenue  
Altoona, PA 16601**

**[www.pressboxprinting.com](http://www.pressboxprinting.com)**

## DISTRICT 10 AA REPORT

By **DON SHAFFER**

*District 10 Contributor*



*(Editor's Note: In last month's column I focused solely on girls' wrestling. This month, it's all about the guys.)*

### AA State Tournament Recap

This is not your Daddy's double A.

Since splitting into two classes back in 1974, Class AA wrestling in Pennsylvania has been widely viewed as a step behind Class AAA. While there have always been individual exceptions I would agree that it has been largely true, especially when it came to the depth at the individual and team championships.

But with the emergence of elite teams like Faith Christian, Bishop McDevitt, Notre Dame GP and Conwell Egan and the re-emergence of Bishop McCort, I feel that Class AAA no longer holds a significant advantage over AA. If you want to argue that AAA is still dominant, you'd have to concede that the gap is closing.

In my eyes, I see a lot more parity between the classes than I have in the past. The quality is there in Class AA and so is the depth.

As an example, consider this. Two District 10 wrestlers were chosen to compete at the Pittsburgh Wrestling Classic this year – **Louie Gill of Reynolds, pictured**, and Hunter Hohman of Grove City. Gill has been a regular in the national rankings cracking the Top 10 several times. Hohman was ranked as high as No. 23 in the country by SBLive. Both finished 4th at the state tournament. Fourth! State-wide there are other examples of top-tier wrestlers not winning or repeating as individual champions but my focus is District 10 so I'll stay in my lane.

Perhaps I see it from a slightly different perspective because District 10 has always been double-A first. Of the 32 high school programs here, 27 compete in AA. The rural makeup of our district means that big schools are few and far between. Erie, with a population of 94,826 is the fourth largest city in Pennsylvania, but you won't find another one on PA's largest cities list until No. 138 (Erie County's Harborcreek has a population of 16,678).

Teams like Reynolds, Fort LeBoeuf and Greenville have always held their own against the best Class AA has had to offer. In fact, Reynolds alone has won a combined 17 PIAA Championships in wrestling -- 8 team titles and

9 team points crowns.

This season, Reynolds improved dramatically from the beginning of the season and placed fourth at the AA team tournament. They finished behind Faith Christian, Bishop McCort and Notre Dame GP. Reynolds beat Bishop McDevitt. I think Coach Casey Taylor would tell you he was pleased with his team's efforts though I'm confident he would also tell you he was not fully satisfied.

But in terms of the 2024 PIAA individual championships, District 10 struggled to catch a wave. Ultimately, that could have as much to do with an improving level of quality as it does a lackluster performance on the part of our participants. Regardless, of the district's 32 state qualifiers only 11 brought home medals. None were able to reach the finals and, in fact, no wrestler from the Northwest Region won silver or gold.

Of those 11, only 4 reached the third-place matches and three of those were from Reynolds with Raider senior Chase Bell (139) earning the lone bronze medal. Gill (121) and Raider freshman Logan Stewart (127) placed fourth, as did Saegertown junior Carter Beck (114), now a two-time medalist.

Team-wise, Reynolds finished seventh in the standings and after a couple of sub-par seasons the Raiders' program is on the rise. Bell was Reynolds' top performer at states and caps a 119-51 career that sees him head off to D-III Frostburg State.

Grove City qualified four wrestlers for states with three bringing home medals. Senior Hunter Hohman (172) was fourth, junior Cody Hamilton (152) was fifth and sophomore Hudson Hohman (133) finished eighth.

Grove City Coach Wes Phipps, a Penn State alum, has his Eagles soaring as only three-time placer Hunter Hohman (136-15) is a senior. Hamilton and Hudson Hohman are both two-time placewinners. The Eagles' other state qualifier was freshman Tanner Hamilton (114). GC finished 11th in team points.

Hunter Hohman, who has signed to wrestle at American University, also dominated on the football field -- throwing 62 touchdowns and completing passes for more than 6,300 yards as a three-year starter. He also rushed for more than 1,800 yards.

On an individual basis, Conneaut's Hunter Gould wrapped up a terrific career as a four-time state qualifier and three-time placewinner with a career mark of 137-19. One of the most technically sound wrestlers you will come across, he is heading off to Lock Haven

University.

Gill's numbers are a bit better. Even though he was not eligible to compete in the 2023 post-season, he finishes as a three-time placewinner, finishing first, second and fourth. He will move on to compete at North Carolina State after going 143-17 in high school.

Girard's Story Buchanan wrapped up a stellar 117-25 scholastic career with a fifth-place medal. He is his school's first ever three-time PIAA qualifier. His college choice remains undecided.

North East junior Cyrus Hurd (133) placed fifth, moving up one spot from where he placed last year. His career mark, which includes a freshman season at Class AAA Cathedral Prep, stands at 86-16.

Greenville junior Teague Calvin (215) earned an eighth place medal on his first trip to states. The Trojan strongman is 90-32 in his career.

Seniors who wrapped up outstanding careers as state qualifiers and 100-match winners include: Fort LeBoeuf's JoJo Przybycien (147-35) and Connor McChesney (108-33), General McLane's Magnus Lloyd (125-32) and Chance Kimmy (108-58), Sharpsville's Caullin Summers (131-35) and Alex Rueberger (124-44), Commodore Perry's Wyatt Lazzar (117-27) and Cambridge Springs' Brody Beck (118-44). Lazzar is headed for Lock Haven and Kimmy to Gannon while Lloyd remains undecided.

McChesney and Greenville senior Joey Peterson (285) both fought through injuries to compete in the postseason and deserve recognition for simply qualifying for the state championships. They showed incredible heart.

In that same light, Fort LeBoeuf senior Jake Bennett was not able to compete in the post-season due to an injury sustained at the D-10 team championships but still finished his career at 108-48.

**D-10 report continued on pg 18**



# Cael Sanderson: Blazing A New Trail

*by: Chris Lembeck, special to PWN*

In another lifetime, **Cael Sanderson** might have been a writer. Because not only is he rewriting the wrestling record books, but also, arguably in the greater scheme of things, he's rewriting the world's oldest and greatest sport.

I don't think he set out to do this. I feel his reimagining of wrestling comes out of his personal values and his dedication to the overall growth of the young people in his charge.

Let's back into this, citing his remarkable achievements and then asking how and why.

## Impressive Rivals

Amid a coaching field riddled with a cross face cradle of former great wrestling champions and coaching legends Cael stands apart. Consider, for example, names like six-time world champion, two-time Olympic champion, and two-time NCAA Champion, current **Okla. St head coach John Smith**. Add Iowa coaches **Tom and Terry Brands**, both Olympic Medalists, World Champions and together won five NCAA National Championships. And finishing off the iceberg's tip is **Zeke Jones**, 1991 World Champion, followed in 1992 with an Olympic Silver medal, and accumulated six US Championships along the way.

Remarkably however, this legendary crew of American champions, who once ruled the mats as competitors and, later, as coaches, who not long ago were routinely winning national and world titles, now find themselves behind the leader to the tune of a hundred points.

## How and Why?

The ultra calm and most understated coach in wrestling, Cael Sanderson, does not win James Bond style. Look for no schmoozy speak or top-secret, double-crossing, single-leg takedowns, or futuristic hidden gadgets in the wrestling shoes, picked up on the black market from someone named Darth.

No, the manner in which Cael surpasses the competition is even more impressive than the feat itself, his methodology far more fair, much more interesting, and definitely more human.

Cael has done what all pioneers do. He thought for himself and went his own way. He assumed nothing. Questioned everything. And then designed and developed a system that now enables him to move further and faster than the rest.

When you're putting up numbers like Cael's, you're not one to follow the crowd. You don't march to the beat of a different drummer - you are the different drummer.

Some might say he's a one man band. But a better look sees that his ace supporting staff - **Casey Cunningham, Cody Sanderson and Jimmy Kennedy** - each play a key

role and are keenly instrumental in Cael's symphony of success.

## The "System"

It's simple. He never forgets that he is, first and foremost, an educator—as it happens, a master teacher, a molder of minds and men, a mentor and a mensch (good person). The three-time Hodge winner has fostered a culture that celebrates personal growth and where winning becomes the logical consequence of that growth.

"Inspire" means to urge on, or breathe into. As a long time wrestling enthusiast I believe Cael lives and breathes the word he preaches. This authenticity and the rare ability to bottle and reproduce this elixir is his genius. This is most likely one of the main reasons he's ruling the mats as a Lion rules the jungle.

## Want to know a secret and understand how to move your wrestlers in the most effective way possible?

Cael's wrestlers understand that wrestling is not an identity but a game they play to test and expand their limits. Without external pressure a new and brighter world opens up to these athletes, and their limits are bound only by their imaginations.

After Michelangelo sculpted his masterpiece, he explained, "David was in there the whole time. All I did was chip away the excess." I doubt Cael has that quote on his wall but, but I feel this is totally his style. He sees the greatness in each one and draws it forth until their inner champion is released, harnessed, optimized and finally actualized on the mat.

To be sure, the future of wrestling looks bright. At the top, we've got a good man with a high degree of professionalism and integrity leading our sport. Coach Sanderson is constantly increasing the value of our sport. He achieves this by improving the quality of wrestling, and for the dramatic and professional way that he wins as it produces top-line national attention.

On nationally televised interviews, we have a long line of college champions saying just about the very best words you could ever hope coming out the mouths of superstars. The sport of wrestling is churning out incredibly high value men with wonderful characters serving as awesome role models for our youth. The trickle down effect is set to maximum and is serving us well. We can watch great wrestling on FLO and read about it in great magazines such as PWN. We are very possibly in the heyday of wrestling.

If I were a young coach, I'd consider the results of this novel system. If you want to coach with strategy and class, give Cael's methods a try. If you are an experienced coach, with the same goals, you too might give Coach Cael's methods a look.

If the Sanderson way spreads throughout the country, the overall quality of wrestling will rise which will in turn help bolster one of the best aspects of sports, "competition."

## Another Sign of a Great Leader is he is trustworthy with his word.

In my many years of following Coach Sanderson, he's always been a man of his word - impeccable even. Check again his quote at the top. And look at his actions. He's continually working. He's evolved. He has innovated. True to his word, Cael has done all he said one should do if wanting to be somebody in the great sport of wrestling.

Cael is a four-time undefeated NCAA Champion, silver World medalist and Olympic Champion. Now as a coach, he's setting more records than he did as a competitor. If you are a coach, parent or athlete, he's been pretty much giving us the farm. All we have to do is follow his keen advice and master blueprint. For our convenience and benefit, he's honed his entire philosophy down to a single sentence, and thankfully for us, he's penned it in this lifetime.

"Unless you continually grow, evolve and innovate, you will learn a quick and painful lesson from someone who has."

## Go Wrestling!

*Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.—Ralph Waldo Emerson*

*Talent hits targets no one else can hit. Genius hits targets no one else can see.—Arthur Schopenhauer*

*"Unless you continually work, evolve and innovate, you're going to learn a quick and painful lesson from someone who has." - Cael Sanderson*

*Chris is a member of the Minnesota Wrestling Hall of Fame, former World Silver Medalist, NCAA All-American and team captain for University of Northern Iowa.*

*He currently lives in Cedar Rapids, IA working as a wrestling writer and consultant for coaches, parents and athletes across the country.*



Did you get your PA Wrestling Fix today???

## Pennsylvania Wrestling Newsmagazine

### Get coverage of....

- \* Division I, II & III
- \* H.S. Individuals & Teams
- \* Junior High Teams

### Plus...

- \* Photos
- \* Interviews
- \* Feature Articles

### Get the latest PA Wrestling News at [www.pawrestling.net](http://www.pawrestling.net)

Special Coaching Staff Offer  
Buy two subscriptions,  
**get one FREE!**  
(Coaches must coach in the same school district)



Subscribe online at: [www.pawrestling.net](http://www.pawrestling.net)  
or send the following information along with a check or money order for \$30 (1 year/six issues) to:

PWN  
409 Mill Road  
Duncansville, PA 16635

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

3 year Subscription (\$85 for 18 issues)

National Wrestling Media Association Publication of the Year 2009

Now in our 29th year of publication, we are offering a special deal of \$29 / year for first-time subscribers until May 1, 2024!

## District 6 Report Continued

*continued from page 9*

"I beat a really good kid to win my first state title, and that meant a lot to me, but the second one meant a lot more to me," Simcox said. "(Winning a second straight championship) is harder to do than winning a first, and I beat a very good opponent (Manville) who was ranked first in the country at that weight class at the time."

State College coach Ryan Cummins gave Simcox his just due. "It was a tough match," Cummins said of the championship bout. "Simcox of Central Mountain is a great wrestler. In those types of tough matches, you win some, and you lose some."

Simcox, who logged a 31-3 record this season and finished with a high school career mark of 137-18, will compete on the NCAA Division I level at the University of North Carolina.

Simcox's Central Mountain teammate, junior Dalton Perry – a Penn State commit who won the Class 3A 126-pound state championship as a freshman – dropped a tough 3-1 overtime decision to Thomas Jefferson High School's Maddox Shaw in this year's 139-pound state final.

"It was close," Perry said of his championship match against Shaw, who won with an overtime takedown. "I don't think that I got to my offense in the final match. It is what it is."

### Cunningham Wins Gold

State College junior Cunningham, a Penn State commit, polished off an outstanding 37-1 season with a 2-0 victory over Central Dauphin's Ryan Garvick in the Class 3A 160-pound state championship match.

Cunningham also won district and regional titles this season, and his victory in the state championship bout was the 100th of his high school career.

Cummins said that Cunningham worked tirelessly in the weight room during the past offseason to prepare for this season.

"He definitely put the time in," Cummins said. "He wrestled a ton of offseason matches, he really matured physically and filled out quite a bit, and he grew into that (160-pound) weight class."

"He is much improved from last year," Cummins added. "He had a couple close matches at the state tournament, but he did what he had to do to win. His style of wrestling is kind of funky – he's rolling all over the place, but his body awareness is impressive, and he definitely knows where he is on the mat at all times."

Cunningham has also developed into a very physical wrestler who racks up bonus points for himself and his State College team.

"He has shown an improved physical strength this year, and he's been able to

overpower a lot of opponents," Cummins said. "He scores a ton of team points for us with falls and technical falls."

Manville carded a 26-2 record this season and a 114-11 mark in four seasons in a State College career that included a state championship and two state runner-up finishes.

"He was undefeated going into the regional championship match," Cummins said. "He had a heck of a season."

### Pittsburgh Wrestling Classic

Bishop McCort's Gibson (133 pounds) and Central Mountain's Simcox (139) were scheduled to compete for the Pennsylvania all-star team against the United States all-star team in the Pittsburgh Wrestling Classic on Saturday night, March 30, at Peters Township High School.

Gibson, ranked 16th nationally in his weight class by FloWrestling, was scheduled to battle sixth-ranked Adrian Meza of Valiant Prep in Arizona. Simcox, ranked third in his weight class, was slated to face Valiant Prep's Kyler Larkin.

Results from that event for Gibson and Simcox will be included in the Pennsylvania Wrestling Magazine's May edition.

*(John Hartsock has covered high school wrestling and other sports for the Altoona Mirror for over 40 years)*

## AARON BROOKS WINS HODGE TROPHY

*recapped by Joe Baranik*

It was announced on Monday, April 1, that Penn State's Aaron Brooks (197) of North Hagerstown High School, MD, had won the 2024 WIN Magazine/Culture House Dan Hodge Trophy, awarded to the best college wrestler in the country. The Hodge was established in 1995, and is comparable to winning the Heisman Trophy in college football. Brooks, who had not given up a takedown all year and had bonus point wins in all but two bouts, dominated all season, earning 6 pins, 11 tech falls and 3 major decisions. At the NCAAs, he scored Bonus point victories in all but one of his five matches (6-1 win in the finals vs. Trent Hilday of NC State) and his closest match during the regular season was 5-1 win over Zach Glazier of Iowa. His bonus percentage (90.91) is the best in the country. He finished his senior season 22-0, and became the 7th 4x NCAA champion ever, right behind his teammate Carter Starocci. Together, they are the first 4x NCAA champions at Penn State and the first two to win 4 titles the same year. Ironically, Brooks won his first three NCAA titles at 184 lbs. and went up to 197 his senior year-the same way his coach, Cael Sanderson, won his 4 crowns.

Brooks told WIN Magazine, "Winning the Hodge Trophy is a blessing. It is like the Heisman Trophy in football, so to know the hard work and dedication I've put in is being rewarded with such a historic award is really cool."

"I am really happy for Aaron", Sanderson added. "He worked hard, kept improving in all of his positions and had a dominating season."

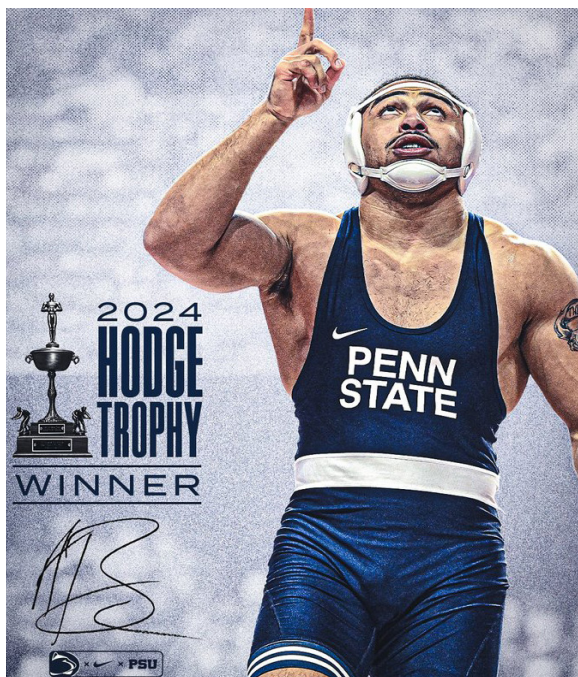
Brooks is a 5x All-American (the 2020 NCAA tournament was canceled and Brooks was the #3 seed) and has amassed a career record of 89-3. He won the Big 10 tournament as a true freshman at 184 lbs. in 2020.

Brooks becomes the fifth wrestler in Penn State history, and the 7th to win the Hodge for the Lions, as David Taylor (165) & Zain Retherford (149) won it twice. The first to win the Hodge for PSU was heavyweight Kerry McCoy, followed by David Taylor, Zain Retherford and Bo Nickal (184). It is fascinating that his coach, Cael Sanderson, won the Hodge Trophy three times (only wrestler to win 3), and coached all of PSU's winners except McCoy. Penn State is the only school to win more than four Hodge Trophies. The final nominees for the award were Levi Haines (157), Greg Kerkvliet (285), Parker Keckeisen (184), Starocci and Brooks.

Mike Chapman, wrestling historian and creator of WIN Magazine and the Dan Hodge Trophy (sponsored by ASICS), stated that "Aaron Brooks stands tall in the long list of Dan Hodge Trophy winners, not only for his performance on the mat this year (and all four years for that matter) but for the way he has represented his school and his sport. Penn State has set the standard for team excellence over the past dozen years and also for individual excellence. It's a pleasure to welcome Aaron to the rollcall of Dan Hodge Trophy recipients."

### Dan Hodge facts

- Dan Hodge (177 lbs.) was a 3x NCAA Champion (freshman were not eligible to wrestle in the NCAA's back then)
- Hodge finished his college career with a record of 46-0 and 36 pins and won every conference and NCAA tournament he entered as an Oklahoma Sooner.
- In all three of his NCAA finals appearances, he pinned his opponent; twice he pinned his way through the entire tournament
- Dan Hodge never gave up a single takedown in his college wrestling career
- He is the only college wrestler to grace the cover of Sports Illustrated-April 1, (1957)
- He also won the Golden Gloves Championship in boxing
- Hodge who was a huge ambassador of wrestling for many years, died in 2020 at the age of 88.



PWN 2023/2024



## Half Nelson Report

*By don't panic with Coach Joe*

**Baranik, Owner/  
Founder**



**In the Middle  
of the Penn  
State Wrestling  
Dynasty:**

So many chapters can be written about the Nittany Lion wrestling dynasty as it continues to evolve

over Coach Cael Sanderson's 15 years at the helm. Eleven NCAA team titles in the last 13 years and counting. Keep in mind, the 2020 tournament was canceled because of the China virus, so Cael has coached 11 NCAA team titles in the last 14 years that there has been a tournament. There is a pattern, as the titles seem to come in droves. The Lions won four straight from 2011 to 2014, four more from 2016 to 2019, and the past three from 2022-2024. This past title has come with two prominent starters out of the line-up from last year in 3rd place finisher **Shayne Van Ness** and NCAA qualifier and promising star **Alex Facundo**. What is Penn State's



secret to their dominance in college wrestling? It may be the philosophy Coach Cael has brought to Happy Valley which is gratitude is the new attitude. It seems like to a T that every PSU wrestler that is interviewed by the media says they are grateful to be a part of this program and grateful to compete. We will know soon when we will find out who among Starocci and Kerkvliet will be coming back as Bartlett has already

announced his intentions to return in 24-25 for another season. There is plenty of firepower left on the mats to predict PSU could 4-peat once again, not to mention their #1 recruiting class coming in this fall and the fact that Penn State will host the Olympic Trails on April 19-20. This will definitely bring more attention to their already thriving program.

**Jealous:** I am a little envious of the storylines of **Caitlyn Clark** and Iowa's women basketball team and NC State men

and women's BB teams making the NCAA Final Four and all the national publicity they are receiving. They certainly deserve it, but so does Penn State Wrestling and their team dominance and their two 4x NCAA champions Starocci and Brooks. Maybe the Penn State administration should have had a parade to welcome the team home from the NAAs, or shown the NCAA tournament on a big screen at Rec Hall. At any rate, this team needs some national publicity besides ESPN.

Two big positives that are a plus for college wrestling are the fact that ESPN's flagship station put the quarters, semis and finals on live Thursday, Friday and Saturday night in primetime. They also put the other sessions on ESPNU. And the popular podcast, "**The Pat McAfee Show**", had former wrestler and MMA champion **Daniel "DC" Cormier** on their show the Monday after nationals. Cormier, **pictured below**, helped do commentary of the NCAA semis and finals. McAfee said he was intrigued by the wrestling at the NCAA Wrestling Championships and was glued to the TV.



**Our Wrestling Guy Quint:**

**Quint Kessenich**, who does the mat-side interviews for ESPN after the wrestlers come off the mat, is a former wrestler from Lynbrook High School in Long Island, NY. He told Jason Bryant on his Short Time Wrestling Podcast that he lost to Mike Bevilacqua, a former AA for Penn



State, in the Section finals of his junior year. He also played soccer and lacrosse. He told Bryant he had offers to wrestle in college but he related a story where he was winning 3-2 with 18 seconds to go in the Regional finals his senior year, and he got reversed at the end and lost. The 2x county champion was devastated and decided to play lacrosse in college. He was an outstanding goalie for John Hopkins University where he was part of an NCAA championship team.

**NCAA Tournament Officiating-Sub Par:** Although I loved watching the NCAA championships, it could have been so much more exciting. Some of it was the officiating; but, in their defense, sometimes their hands were tied because of the rules. I feel we need to go back to the basics and keep it simple for the fans and the officials. I believe it is time to go back to one official and get rid of video review. For the first 80 or so years of the national tournament, we had no foam bricks flying and only one referee. We need to keep the action going. Wrestling used to pride itself on being the sport that required the most stamina. Now, some of those video reviews take 3 to 6 minutes and there may be more than one in a match. I would rather see a missed call by an official and keep the action flowing, than all of the stoppages. I talked to numerous fans that agree. We also need to make the rules easy for the referee to call. One example may be if a wrestler backs up three straight steps, it is automatic stalling. I saw another instance where one wrestler had both of his opponent's ankles and he was down on his hip. The wrestler who was down on the mat was barely reaching back for a whizzer. This should be an automatic takedown since the offensive wrestler put him there. It took over four minutes of review before the wrestler was awarded the takedown. On a positive note, I do like the 3-point takedown. It takes a lot of technique to take down a good opponent.

Until May - watch the Olympic Trials from State College, PA on April 19-20. You will see many familiar faces as Team USA prepares for the Summer Olympics in Paris, France in August.

Keep your grades up, your weight down and Go 4 the Pin.

He has coached wrestling on every level and still coaches today. Feedback is welcomed at [pwn.baranik@gmail.com](mailto:pwn.baranik@gmail.com)

**Joe Baranik is the Founder/  
Owner of the Pennsylvania  
Wrestling Newsmagazine.**



**Utility Keystone**

**TRAILER SALES**

MANHEIM & PITTSBURGH, PA

A SISTER COMPANY OF PENNSTRO LEASING, LLC



# EXCEEDING YOUR SEMI-TRAILER NEEDS

*New Utility, Cheetah, Evans, and All Used Makes/Models*



## SALES

Let Us Take the Guesswork Out of Your Fleet Investment with Sound Advice and Quality Semi-Trailers that Fit Your Needs – 30 Lines of Trailers, Unparalleled Service, and Unrivaled Expertise!



## MOBILE & SERVICE CENTER

30 SERVICE CENTER TECHS  
16 STATE-OF-THE-ART SERVICE BAYS  
7 SEMI-TRAILER MOBILE TECHS



## BUY PARTS IN-SHOP

*Get Back on the Road Faster!*  
OEM and Aftermarket Trailer Parts for all Makes and Models  
24K+ Parts

DOWNLOAD OUR APP FOR  
EXCLUSIVE SPECIALS



**CONTACT US** 📞 717-400-7183 📍 1976 Auction Rd., Manheim, PA 17545

[www.UtilityKeystone.com](http://www.UtilityKeystone.com)





## March/April **TAKEDOWN TRIVIA**

### compiled by Joe Baranik

- Five Div. I college wrestlers finished the year unbeaten: Levi Haines, Carter Starocci (contested bouts), Aaron Brooks and Greg Kerkvliet all of Penn State. And Parker Keckkeisen (184) of Northern Iowa.
- Redshirt freshman Nick Feldman (285) (Malvern Prep) of Ohio State, who placed 5th at the NCAA's, joins his Father Josh Feldman, as an All-American. Josh placed 7th at 285 lbs. for Virginia Tech in 1994.
- Penn State can now boast that they have four 4x NCAA Champions that either coach or train with the Nittany Lion Wrestling Club. at their facility, Starting with **Coach Cael, you have Kyle Dake, Starocci and Brooks** to equal 16 NCAA titles among the four
- PSU now has a total of 59 NCAA champions (38 under Coach Cael).
- The Nittany Lions earned 25 bonus point wins at the NCAA's with 11 MD, 8 TF and 6 pins for an extra 35 points. They went 45-9 over the 3 day tournament!
- Since 2011, the Blue & White is 56-8 in the NCAA semifinals for a .875 winning percentage. They own a 38-18 record in the finals.
- PSU has had unbeaten seasons in 8 of the last 9 years! This season they went 12-0 and the combined individual record was 101-19 over the 12 duals.
- Ty Watters (149) (West Allegheny) of WVU, is the first wrestler in program history to win a Big 12 title as a true freshman. Ty became an AA by placing 4th at the NCAAs and finished the season 21-4 with 10 pins.
- It was recently announced that Matt Valenti, a former 2x NCAA champion for the University of Penn will become the Associate Head at Penn and transition to the Head Coaching position for the 2025-26 season. Current Head Coach Roger Reina who is the winningest coach for the Quakers, will pass the torch to his all-time winningest wrestler. Reina has a coaching record of 248-144 and his star pupil has 137 career wins-the most in program history. Valenti won back to back NCAA titles in 2006 and 2007 at 133 lbs. and is a 3x All-American. Reina also coached Brett Matter to an NCAA title and Brandon Slay to a runner-up finish and a Gold Medal in the Olympics.
- The Lehigh Mt. Hawks are expected to return 7 of its 8 NCAA qualifiers next season.
- 68 out of 78 Div. I teams were represented at this year's NCAA tournament.
- Since 2011, Penn State has had the most individual NCAA champions with 38. Cornell is second with (14), followed by Ohio State (10), Oklahoma State (10) and Iowa (7).
- Mark your calendar for March 20-22 for next year's NCAA Wrestling Championships at the Wells Fargo Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The Birthplace of Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness!

## **Nittany Lion Notes from the NCAAs**

- Truax (184), the #6 seed placed 5th by shutting out the #2 seed Isaiah Salazar of Minnesota 12-0. He went 5-2 over the 3 days and became a 4x AA. He finishes the season 19-6 and has a career record of 86-27.
- Starocci Quote on ESPN.com: "I wouldn't say I do this for any titles or anything like that. For me, what gets me out of bed is to be able to take everybody on. That's kind of what's scratching my ego a little bit, is knowing that there's no one that can beat me. "Star," the #9 seed earned shut outs in his last three bouts, including defeating two former NCAA champs in Miki Lewis of VT 4-0 in the quarter finals & Shane Griffith in the semi-finals 2-0. In the finals, he beat true freshman Rocco Welsh (Waynesburg) 2-0. He wrestled the entire tournament with a bulky brace on his right knee. He told ESPN.com that he was making weight by riding the stationary bike and Coach Sanderson was right there riding a bike with me. As I looked around, the other coaches from the other schools, were on their phones. "I'm like, this dude is in the foxhole with us. I think that means more than anything."
- Brooks (197) became a 5x AA and a rare 4x NCAA champion with a 6-1 win vs. #2 seed and unbeaten Trent Hidlay (Mifflin County) of NC State. He also earned two pins and two TF in dominating the tournament and was voted "OW" of the tournament and earned the Most Dominant Wrestler of the Year Award for his efforts. He finished the year 22-0, and amassed a career record of 89-3.
- Penn State finished the season with four unbeaten wrestlers in Haines (26-0), Starocci (17-0) (contested bouts), Brooks (22-0), & Kerkvliet (23-0). Starocci, who hurt his knee in the last match of the season vs. Edinboro on Feb. 25, and hadn't wrestled in 26 days before the start of the national tournament. It is a testament to his mental and physical toughness. After he won, he hugged his coaches, then raised the hand of Athletic Trainer Dan Monthly for his help in getting him back on the mats. It was a great picture shown on ESPN.
- True freshman Davis (125), ends his freshman campaign at 22-4 and a BIG champion.
- Sophomore Nagao (133) the #10 seed, went 3-2 at the NCAA's with one win shy of AA status as well. He finished the season at 17-7 and was an AA last year for the University of Minnesota.
- PSU went 45-9 over the 3 day tournament and earned 25 bonus point wins with 11 MD, 8 TF and 6 pins. That came out to 35 bonus points toward the team score.
- Penn State clinched the 2024 NCAA Championship on Friday night during the national semifinals. The crown is Penn State's 11th in the last 13 tournaments, all under Sanderson, and the 12th overall (Penn State won in 1953). The Nittany Lions added eight All-Americans to their ledger, bringing the school's total to 254 all-time (91 under Sanderson).
- Coach Cael Sanderson has tied legendary coach Ed Gallagher of Oklahoma State with 11 titles. Dan Gable leads all coaches with 15 Div. I NCAA Team Championships.
- PSU's 12 total NCAA crowns is third most in NCAA history behind Oklahoma St. (34) and Iowa (15).

## DISTRICT 10 HS REPORT

*continued from page 11*

*By Don Shaffer*

### AAA State Tournament Recap

**Brady Slicker, pictured below left, Hickory High School's ultra-talented freshman,** emerged as District 10's lone 2024 PIAA medalist with an eighth-place finish.

Slicker (127) was one of three Hornets to qualify for the state tournament – that's more than any other D-10 school. Slicker went 2-3 in Hershey to finish his season at 33-11. He won his blood round match over Ky Szewczyk of Waynesburg, 7-6. His other win came over Ryder Campbell of Bethlehem Catholic, 6-4, in his opening match.

Also qualifying for the state tournament were Hickory's Elijah Scriven (114), a freshman, and Brody Bishop (121). Scriven and Bishop both went 1-2.

Meadville had a pair of state qualifiers in Ben Fuller (114) and Ty Tidball (215) while Cathedral Prep had one with Keagen Oler (127). All three wrestlers went 1-2. Overall, D-10 Class AAA managed just six state qualifiers.

**AA Districts** – Reynolds was the AA champion with 192 points and four individual champions. Led by four-time D-10 champion Magus Lloyd (189), General McLane finished second with 137 points. Fort LeBoeuf got its third individual title from Przybycien and placed third with 135.5.

General McLane's Magnus Lloyd (125-32) four D-10 titles were evenly split between Class AAA and Class AA. **He is pictured bottom right.**

Reynolds' champions were Angelo Lomonte (107), Gill (121), Stewart (127) and Bell (139). All four went on to qualify for the state tournament.



PWN 2023/2024

General McLane, Fort LeBoeuf, and Grove City each crowned a pair of champions. Ryan Dedrick (215) also won for GM and heavyweight John Duran was the Bisons' other titlist. GC's champs were Hamilton and Hunter Hohman. It was the third title for Hohman and the second for Hamilton.

Also winning their second district titles were Gill, Beck, Hurd and Commodore Perry's Wyatt Lazzar (145). Hurd won a AAA title as a freshman for Cathedral Prep.

Fort LeBoeuf's Shane McChesney was named the District 10 Coach of the Year for the second straight season.

### AAA Districts

Cathedral Prep, Meadville and Hickory dominated the AAA championships finishing 1-2-3. In winning the team title, Prep put nine in the finals, crowned five champs and finished with 215 points. Meadville was right behind with seven finalists, including five champs, and scored 199 points. Hickory finished with 180.5 points. The Hornets had three champs and eight finalists.

The highlight match of the finals came at 127 pounds where Prep's Oler edged Hickory's Slicker, 10-8, in a battle of state-ranked wrestlers. (Oler went 3-0 against Slicker this season.)

Prep's other champs were Aiden Carter (107), Brandon Byrd (152), Bo Martucci (160) and Corey Kowalski (189).

Meadville's titles went to Jacoby Thompson (139), Ryder Say (145), Connor Kearns (172), Tidball (189) and James Peters (285) while Hickory's titles were won by Scriven, Bishop and Dylan O'Brien (133).

As reported earlier this season, a big change is coming to District 10 next year when Cathedral Prep will drop to Class AA and Harbor Creek will move up to AAA. Hickory also drops back down to AA.

### NCAA CHAMPIONSHIPS –

Carter Starocci cemented his legacy as “legend” in becoming just the sixth four-time champion in NCAA history.

The Cathedral Prep graduate was one of four Penn State wrestlers to win national titles as the Nittany Lions waltzed their way unimpeded to the NCAA crown in St. Louis – its 11th since 2011. So dominant was PSU that it broke the tournament scoring mark (172.5) and became the first team to post a triple-digit victory margin.

Though PSU's team title was always a safe bet, Starocci's run to a fourth title was anything but a lock. An injury in the final dual match on Feb. 25 placed a cloud of doubt around his chances of competing. When his coaches made the decision to enter him but default him out of the Big 10 Championships that uncertainty only grew.

As a three-time national champion, Carter earned an at-large bid for nationals but the two medical default losses at the Big 10s dropped him to a No. 9 seed.

Call it gutsy, call it heroic, call it winning a national championship with one good leg but when the whistle blew in St. Louis Carter was on the line and ready to go.

He won a pair of Thursday matches to set up a quarterfinal showdown against top-seeded Mekhi Lewis of Virginia Tech. When Carter nailed a first-period takedown, all doubt evaporated and there was an overwhelming feeling that he would not be stopped.

Though his offense was deliberate the rest of the way, he did not surrender a single point in his final three matches.

“As far as the tournament, it was fun seeing that I could overcome this adversity, I think that's just a testament to how I was brought up. My family, my parents just always being tough expecting nothing but excellence and always doing better,” Carter said.

Not counting the default losses, Carter's career record now stands at 83-2. He is the winner of 74 straight matches. He has one year of college eligibility remaining should he choose to exercise it. Up next appears to be an appearance at the April 19 and 20 Olympic Trials.

Four other D-10 natives were national qualifiers including Pitt's Cole Matthews (141), Nebraska's Jacob Van Dee (133), Bucknell's Dorian Crosby (285), and The Citadel's Jeffrey Boyd (149).

Matthews, a Reynolds graduate, went 2-2 and ends his highly productive career at Pitt as a five-time national qualifier and a 100-plus match winner. He was an All American in 2022.

Crosby finished 2-2 at nationals and 28-13 overall. He and Van Dee (1-2, 25-12) won opening round matches. Both are graduates of Cathedral Prep. Boyd, a McDowell product, went 0-2 and finished his season with a solid 18 wins.



www.pawrestling.net

## District 9 HS Report

**By: Kenn Staub**



### NCAA DIVISION I

Two former District 9 wrestlers – Lehigh’s Nathan Taylor (Brookville) and NC

State’s Ed Scott (DuBois) – showcased their skills on the national stage at the T-Mobile Center in Kansas City. Unfortunately, both fell just short of All-American status, the pair losing in the blood round.

Taylor, a junior, entered his second NCAA tournament as the EIWA champion at 285-pounds, having pinned Bucknell’s Dorian Crosby in the conference finals (1:27).

The weight’s fifth seed in Kansas City, Talar opened with two wins, first downing Trevor Tinker of Cal Poly, the 25th seed, 11-4, and then decisioning Oklahoma State’s Konner Doucet of Oklahoma State, the 12th seed, 6-1.

Taylor lost a heartbreaker in the quarterfinals, edged 4-1 in sudden victory by fourth-seeded Cohlton Shultz of Arizona State.

The Lehigh grapplers’ tournament ended in his first bout on the consolation side of the bracket, Taylor once again falling in overtime, coming up short against Campbell’s Taye Ghadiali, the 7th seed, 8-5. He finished the 2023-2024 campaign 27-7.

Taylor was something of a late bloomer at Brookville High School, going 1-4 as a freshman (2017-2018) and 17-12 as a sophomore (2018-2019).

Things really started clicking for him as a junior (2019-2020), when, competing at 220-pounds, he posted a 38-7 record, winning districts and regionals and placing fourth at states. For 2020-2021, Taylor slotted in at heavyweight, amassing a 31-1 record and climbing to the top step of the district, regional, and state podiums. He completed his scholastic career 87-24.

Scott, another junior, started this year’s postseason with his second consecutive ACC championship, decisioning North Carolina’s Sonny Santiago, 8-2, to claim the 157-pound title.

At the NCAA tournament, Scott, the fourth seed, bonus-pointed his way through the opening two contests – starting with a tech of 29th seed Legend Lamar of Cal Poly, 16-3 (6:04), and then majoring Minnesota’s Michael Blockhus, the 13th seed, 19-8.

A familiar ACC opponent awaited Scott in the quarterfinals, Bryce Andonian of Virginia Tech. Scott beat Andonian two weeks prior, 14-5, in the quarterfinals of the conference tournament. Andonian flipped the script at the NAAs, beating the Wolfpack grappler, 13-7.

Scott’s tournament ended in his next bout, MAC champion and seventh seed Peyton Keller of Ohio University pinning him early in the first

period (1:03).

He posted a 25-9 mark for 2023-2024. This was Scott’s third consecutive appearance at the NCAA tournament. Last year, he was an All-American by virtue of his fifth-place finish.

Scott was one of District 9’s best, compiling a career mark of 151-6 at DuBois (2016-2020). A four-time district and regional champion, he went 79-0 his last two seasons enroute to winning back-to-back titles in Hershey. He placed third at states as a freshman, but did not medal his sophomore season. His 105 career pins are a district record.

### NCAA Division II

Johnsonburg product Cole Casilio, a redshirt-sophomore at Gannon, qualified for his second consecutive NCAA championships after a runner-up finish at the Super Regional 1 tournament.

Whereas Casilio won a match at last year’s NCAA tournament, he went 0-and-2 in Wichita, Kan. (March 15-16).

Casilio, an All-PSAC second-teamer a year ago, finished the 2023-2024 season with a 23-13 record.

At Johnsonburg (2017-2021), Casilio was a district champion his junior and senior seasons. As a junior, he was regional runner-up. He won the North West regional tournament his senior season and placed seventh at the PIAA championship. Casilio a scholastic mark of 115-24.

### Clarion Golden Eagles

The Clarion Golden Eagles, the only college program in District 9, advanced one to the NCAA Division I Championship – MAC 184-pound runner-up Cam Pine (Ransom, W.Va./Washington).

Pine, a senior, entered the event as the 27th seed. He was teched in the first round by Penn State’s Bernie Truax, 18-3 (5:10), the sixth seed, and then lost a 9-6 decision to 22nd seed Gavin Kane of North Carolina. It was Pine’s first NCAA tournament appearance.

John Worthing (Owego, N.Y./Tioga) came within one win of qualifying for this second consecutive NCAA championships. After losing in the conference semifinals, the Golden Eagle 174-pounder won two on the consolation side of the bracket, forcing a bout for true second.

The Golden Eagles had five other conference placers – Joey Fischer (Pittsburgh, Pa./South Park) and Ryan Sullivan (Pittsburgh, Pa./Shaler), sixth at 125 and 141 pounds, respectively; Ethan Wiant (Oak Ridge, Pa./Redbank Valley), seventh at 197 pounds; and John Meyers (Greensburg, Pa./Greensburg Salem), eighth at 285 pounds.

Wiant is the only former District 9 grappler on the Clarion roster, having wrestled scholastically 16 miles south for long-time Redbank Valley coach Mike Kundick.

At Redbank Valley (2016-2020), Wiant posted a record of 110-24 despite only wrestling 10 matches as a sophomore. He was a district champion as a junior (2019) and senior (2020), winning the Northwest Regional tournament his final scholastic season. Wiant advanced to the state tournament his last two campaigns as a Bulldog, but never placed in Hershey.

Now a college junior, Wiant was a first-time starter for the Golden Eagles this season.

On his journey to cracking the Clarion line-up, Wiant said, “I was the best guy in the room at Redbank and you never want to go from that to kind of getting manhandled in college. It was hard, it was an adjustment, I just had to keep in mind that I was going to get better. Getting thrown around a bit was kind of a wake-up call.

“I was always waiting for that chance, that time to shine. I kept telling Brock [Zacherl, an assistant coach at Clarion], ‘my time to shine is coming real soon.’ He kept pushing me, the coaches kept pushing me. It felt great [being a starter], knowing all that hard work paid off.”

Added Clarion head coach Keith Ferrero, “He’s been consistent and steady and has slowly gotten a little bit better. Credit hard, consistent work and reliability with his ability to get better. We preach one-percent better every day and he is a great example of a guy who you can see following that.”

Wiant is considerably larger than in high school, where he wrestled at 106 pounds as a freshman and finished as a 145-pound senior. Prior to this season and his move to 197, he spent most of his college career at 165 pounds.



## District 5 H.S. Report

By **TODD IRWIN**



The good news for Chestnut Ridge graduate Justin McCoy was a five-time qualifier to the NCAA Championships during his career wrestling for the University of Virginia.

The bad news is McCoy was never able to earn a medal.

McCoy, a state champion in 2017 and runner-up in 2018 for Ridge, lost in the blood round in Kansas City at 174 pounds to North Dakota State's Gaven Sax, 7-3, to end his career.

An Atlantic Coast Conference champion in 2023 and three-time ACC runner-up, McCoy finished his career at Virginia with a record of 102-37. He wrestled his first three years at 157, the next two at 165 and wound up at 174. McCoy holds the Chestnut Ridge career wins record with a 167-18 mark.

"I'm not defined by wrestling. I'm not defined by standing on a podium or not, or having that plaque," McCoy told the Tribune-Democrat of Johnstown. "Obviously, I want that, but I know that God has a purpose for me, whether I placed or not.

"My goal was to be an All-American. That was a huge goal for me, but God put me through so many other things. It's amazing that I experienced so much. Being able to wrestle here – qualifying five times, wrestling four times (in the NCAA tournament)

is just one of the greatest experiences of my life."

### Kooper Deputy Keeps Winning

It shouldn't be a surprise that Chestnut Ridge's Kooper Deputy is adding more titles to his wrestling resume.

Deputy captured the 82-pound title at the PJW Junior High State Championships on March 3 at the Petersen Events Center in Pittsburgh.

In the Keystone State Championships on March 17 at Santander Arena in Reading, Deputy won the 82-pound state title in the boys 13-14 age group.

Deputy, whose brother Dominic is a two-time state runner-up in his first two years at the high school level, went 6-0 in the PJW tournament and bulldozed his way to the championship finals with three pins and two technical falls.

In the finals, he earned a 7-0 decision over West Allegheny's 2023 PJW youth state champ Jack Stonebraker.

In the Keystone finals, Deputy pinned Millcreek's Lawson Sparks in 2:36. He finished with three technical falls and two falls.

While Deputy was capturing a junior high state title, Berlin Brothersvalley's Carter Durst (157) and North Star's Brady Meyers (252) were placing sixth in the tournament. Meyersdale's Caleb Sines (147) placed eighth.

### Northern Bedford's Dibert Wins Twice

In back-to-back weeks, Northern Bedford's Knox Dibert and Corry's Brody Nickerson faced each other in the 200-pound champi-

onship finals of a state youth tournament.

And for the second week in a row Dibert came out on top. Dibert took Nickerson down in overtime of the 12-U boys age division finals of the PJW Youth State Championships to win, 3-1, at the Petersen Events Center in Pittsburgh. The week before in the Keystone tournament, Dibert won a boys 11-12 state title at 200, winning by disqualification over Nickerson in 3:54.

Chestnut Ridge state champion Violette LaSurre followed up her dominant performance at the PIAA Championships by winning a Keystone title at 148 in the girls 15-16 division, pinning Glendale's Bethany Watt in 53 seconds.

Three Chestnut Ridge wrestlers won titles in the boys 11-12 group in Grayden Paris (65), Crew Musselman (70) and Carter Ickes (80).

Paris earned a 2-0 win over Saucon Valley's Steve Mytych in the finals. Musselman rolled to a 9-0 major decision of Easton's Marco Plasner. Ickes earned his title with a 6-2 victory over Wissahickon's Alyis Brown.

In the boys 9-10 group of the Keystone State Championships, Chestnut Ridge's Kohyn Deputy won at 55 lbs with a pin of Claysburg-Kimmel's Jacobi Burkett in 31 seconds.

Burkett avenged that loss at the PJW State Youth Championships 10-U boys finals, capturing the 55-pound title with a 7-5 ultimate tiebreaker victory over Kohyn.

**Todd Irwin can be followed on X/Twitter @ToddIrwin1**

## PIAA TOURNAMENT AAA Third Place

107	Alexander Diaz, Council Rock North, dec. Emilio Albanese, Emmaus, 8-1
114	Kaedyn Williams, Manheim Township, dec. Gabriel Ballard, Northampton, 8-3
121	Mason Ziegler, Quakertown, dec. Tyson Cook, West Scranton, 3-1
127	Eren Sement, Council Rock North, won by inj. default over Andrew Binni, Canon-McMillan, 9-1 4:49
133	Mason Kernan, Bethel Park, dec. Ramil Islamov, Baldwin, 4-0
139	Seamus Mack, Hempfield, dec. Patrick Kelly, Central Bucks West, 6-1
145	Evan Petrovich, Connellsville, dec. Shane McFillin, Bethlehem Catholic, 2-1
152	Eli Carr, Hempfield Area, dec. Luke Sipes, Altoona, 3-2
160	Bode Marlow, Thomas Jefferson, dec. Nick Kunstek, Pottsville, 3-1 SV
172	Sam Gautreau, Owen J. Roberts, dec. Connor Wetzal, Shikellamy, 5-4
189	Tucker Teats, Selinsgrove, pinned Jared Karabinus, Bethlehem Freedom, 1:37
215	Aiden Hight, Chambersburg, pinned Jake Conroy, Ringgold, 1:27
285	Nick Pavlechko, State College, dec. Michael Hershey, Spring Grove, 3-1

## 10 All-Americans from the Keystone State-including 5 Freshmen

Pennsylvania produced 10 All-Americans from the Keystone State including two champions in Levi Haines and Carter Starocci of PSU. Five native Pennsylvania freshmen earned All-American honors at the Div. I NCAA Championships. They included Ryan Crookham (133) (Saucon Valley HS) of Lehigh (3rd), Tyler Kasak (149) (Beth. Catholic) PSU (3rd), Ty Watters (149) (West Allegheny) WVU (4th), Rocco Welsh (174) (Waynesburg) Ohio St. (2nd), and Nick Feldman (285) (Malvern Prep) Ohio State (5th). All are true freshmen except Feldman & Crookham

**Other AA from the Keystone State:**

- 1st- Levi Haines (157) (Biglerville) Penn State
- 1st-Carter Starocci (174) (Erie Prep) Penn State
- 2nd-Trent Hidlay (197) (Mifflin County) NC State
- 7th-Edmond Ruth (174) (Susquehanna Twp.) Illinois
- 8th-Michael Beard (197) (Malvern Prep) Lehigh

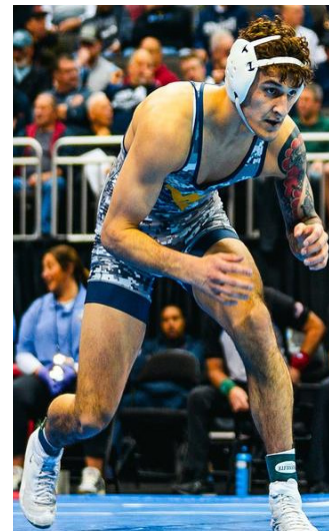
**Correction:** In the March issue, we listed that 43 native Pennsylvanians qualified for the NCAA's. We inadvertently left out true freshman Ty Watters of WVU. Sorry Ty.

**Pictured Left:** Tyler Kasak (149) of Penn State celebrates after defeating NC State's Ryan Jack. Kasak went on to beat fellow Pennsylvanian Ty Watters (West Allegheny) of WVU to earn third place. Kasak lost his first bout at nationals and came back to win 7 straight! Both wrestlers are true freshmen.



**Pictured middle:** Ryan Crookham (133) of Lehigh earns 3rd place at NCAAs

**Pictured right:** Ty Watters (149) (West Allegheny) of WVU placed 4th as a true freshman at the NCAAs.



**Left:** Edmond Ruth, Placed 7th, as a junior for Illinois  
**Middle:** Michael Beard (8th) a junior from Lehigh  
**Right:** Nick Feldman (5th) a redshirt freshman at Ohio State



## Coaching a Super Elite Wrestler... It is NOT what you think!



Coaching a very successful high school wrestler requires a very nuanced and different approach that goes beyond the basic techniques, training techniques, conditioning, and mental preparations. Elite wrestlers

possess highly exceptional technical skills, unique physical skills, and several mental differences, necessitating coaching strategies tailored to their individual needs, and each individual has different needs. Having coached several highly accomplished wrestlers at both the college and high school level I noticed several things from these individuals, all of which contribute to maximizing the potential of a highly successful wrestler. Some of the college wrestlers were Shawn Bunch, Gregor Gillespie, Jarrod King, all NCAA finalist at Edinboro and in high school Carter Starocci, Kawuan DeBoe, Dorian Crosby, Jacob Van Dee, Kaemen Smith, and Paniro Johnson were all PIAA place winners and/or State Champions while at Erie Cathedral Preparatory School (Erie Prep). They were all SUPER talented, but all had many differences.

All of these individuals had personalized training regimens, they all wrestled a great deal in the off-season. All of these super stars did a lot of freestyle/Greco in the spring and summer. They traveled all over the place to seek out competition and were constantly looking to improve themselves on the mat. These wrestlers all thrived on personalized training regimens that catered to their unique strengths and weaknesses. Coaches must conduct comprehensive assessments to identify areas for improvement and tailor training plans accordingly. This may involve focusing on specific techniques, strength and conditioning exercises, or refining existing mental skills to maintain a competitive edge.

Mental development is paramount for success in these wrestlers, particularly at the elite level where competition is fierce, and pressure is high. You as a coach play a pivotal role in nurturing the psychological well-being of these athletes, fostering confidence, focus, and mental toughness. Strategies such as visualization, goal setting, and mindfulness training can help your wrestlers overcome performance anxiety, stay composed under pressure, and bounce back from setbacks. Additionally, creating a supportive team environment where athletes feel valued and motivated can bolster their mental resilience and sense of belonging.

Injury prevention techniques and injuries are an inherent risk in wrestling, but proactive measures can mitigate their occurrence and severity. You as a coach should prioritize injury prevention by emphasizing proper technique, adequate rest, and injury-specific conditioning exercises. Additionally, implementing comprehensive warm-up and cool-down routines, as well as incorporating recovery modalities such as massages, and increased stretching can help minimize the risk of injury and optimize performance. Furthermore, you must closely monitor athletes for signs of overtraining or fatigue and adjust training loads accordingly to prevent burnout and long-term injuries. I know that Carter Starocci was not 100% his sophomore, junior or senior season. Each season he had a different injury or problem that could not be cured before the post season tournaments started, as a matter of fact in both his junior and senior season the doctors told him NOT to compete in the post season, but he did anyway.

You as a coach must work closely with your athletes to develop strategic game plans tailored to individual matchups and scenarios. This may involve analyzing opponents' strengths and weaknesses, refining technical skills, and practicing situational drills to simulate real-world competition. Moreover, fostering adaptability and creativity in problem-solving can empower wrestlers to make split-second decisions and seize opportunities during matches. By continuously refining tactics and staying one step ahead of the competition, coaches can help their athletes maintain a winning edge. I try to always prepare my wrestlers to not worry about their opponents unless they are REALLY good in certain position: if my wrestler were to wrestle someone really good in the top position we would not choose down with our choice. One of my wrestlers former wrestlers was REALLY REALLY good on top, nobody really figured this out until his senior year. Everyone would take down when it was their choice, and he would turn them over almost every time (he finished with 110 pins in high school)

In conclusion coaching a very successful wrestler requires a multifaceted approach that addresses physical, psychological, and tactical dimensions of performance. By implementing personalized training regimens, nurturing mental resilience, prioritizing injury prevention, and refining tactical skills, coaches can unlock the full potential of their elite athletes. Through collaboration, dedication, and innovation, coaches play a pivotal role in shaping the success of their wrestlers and guiding them towards greatness on and off the mat.

Here a few of the quotes that I got from some on my former wrestlers;

*Just be competitive with everything*

*Making yourself better not competing against my opponent!*

*Constantly improving MYSELF! Each and every day*

*Imagine themselves being in different place , like on a bike it is the National Tournament*

*I have to believe in MYSELF even though nobody else does, also thinking that my OP-  
PONENT thinks that I'm better*

*Be the last person to leave practice, always trying to give a little extra more than anybody else*

*Never be satisfied*

*Mix it up, I don't like to lift but I know that it will make me better, I hate to run but it will help my conditioning*

*How you live your life outside of wrestling, eat like a champ, sleep like a champion, study like a champion, think like a CHAMPION ALL THE TIME.....*

*Be the BEST at every aspect of your life*

*Worked out with the local college team as much as possible, especially on Sundays!*

*No one move never works and one move doesn't always work*

*Try everything you can in practice, specialize in a few things, be PERFECT in three/four things.*

*Never feel sorry for yourself, EVER!!!*

*Even though you are going through bad times your opponent might be going through something even worse!*

*Never feel sorry for yourself, NOBODY is 100% healthy and even if he is, he doesn't outwork me and definitely won't beat me!*

*Believe that you are the best, doesn't matter what weight, how you feel, etc*

*Even if I get beat, I think that I'm better than him and the next time I'm going to win that match*

*You can learn from anybody (I could learn something from a incoming 9th grader)*

*Always be OPEN MINDED, you can always learn something new*

*You have to be a little crazy and always think you can beat anybody anyway!*

*You have to know everything your doing will pay off, nothing is guaranteed, the harder you work the better your chances and the harder it is to lose!*

## Ironhead Lines: PSU Wrestling

by: Jeff Byers



When I think back on this historically great season of Penn State Wrestling, I will certainly remember the numbers and in this column over the last few years, I've often recited the numbers and they are astounding

this season. From Cael Sanderson collecting his 11th national title as head coach, tying him with Ed Gallagher for second on the all-time list, trailing only Dan Gable's 15 with Iowa. The 172.5 points scored at the NCAA tournament is a record. The 100 point margin of victory over second-place Cornell is also a record. Having two four-time NCAA champions in Carter Starocci and Aaron Brooks in the same year is a first. The Nittany Lions set a school record with 170.5 points at the Big Ten Championships. Penn State matched a school record with eight All-Americans (all ten postseason entrants advanced to the Round of 12 at the NCAA tournament) and matched the NCAA record with six finalists. The Nittany Lions' postseason starters finished the season with an .887 winning percentage in bouts (214-27). At this year's NCAA tournament, Penn State wrestlers went 45-9 with 6 pins, 8 technical falls, 10 major decisions and 21 decisions to go with 9 losses, three of which were to the national champions.

But this team's greatness, while reflected in the numbers, to me was in the way it personified the things the coaching staff tries to instill. The passion, the consistency, the excitement, the work ethic, the ability to step up when asked and of course, the gratitude. Years ago, Sanderson had "So What" printed on the back of shirts given to his wrestlers. The idea was to not let anything deter or distract you from your goals. So, for example, if you're having problems with a relationship or if you aren't feeling well - So What? Are you going to let anything get in the way of your goals? Don't accept excuses, just stay focused on the task at hand with the overall objective in mind.

Shayne Van Ness (149) was on his way to a sensational season when an injury ended his season. So What? The Nittany Lions turned to true freshman Tyler Kasak who competed hard from the outset and eventually reeled off seven consecutive wins at the NCAA championships to claim to third place at 149 pounds.

Carter Starocci (174) had some health issues during the dual season. So What? Terrell Barraclough stepped in for Starocci, bumped up a weight class and knocked off

Jackson Turley in the Rutgers dual meet.

Greg Kerkvliet (285) also battled some illness for that particular dual. So What? Lucas Cochran bumped up a weight class to fill in and knocked off eventual All-American Yaraslaugh Slavikouski of Rutgers.

Robbie Howard (125) got off to a rough start and had some injury issues. So What? Braeden Davis, another true freshman, stepped in and battled his way to a Big Ten title and a Round of 12 appearance at the NCAA Championships. Aaron Nagao struggled with some illness issues late in the season. So What? He went out and battled his way to the Round of 12 and picked up valuable points for the Nittany Lions to help the team break the scoring record.

Carter Starocci perhaps best personified the So What mantra. After overcoming ongoing health issues during the season and dealing with some difficult personal situations, he suffered a serious knee injury in the final dual meet of the year and seemed ready to call it a career after being held back from competing at the Big Ten Championships. So What? Starocci went out and knocked off a pair of returning NCAA champions en route to capturing his fourth NCAA title. He simply was not going to be denied.

The work ethic of the entire staff and wrestlers is also key. Fans get to see the results of that effort, but it is a daily grind that allows a team to have that type of success. It's going in every day and embracing the physically and mentally challenging nature of the sport and being willing to put in the time and effort to truly improve each day. And it's not just the coaches and the wrestlers. It's the hours spent by the trainer, Dan Monthley, in helping the wrestlers get through their illnesses and injuries to give them a chance to go out and compete at their best. It's the hours spent by Director of Operations Adam Lynch and strength coach Michael Schroeder in planning and executing the regimen for the offseason and in-season and the trips and making sure every detail is accounted for - the food, the workout areas, the laundry - it is also arranged so the wrestlers can focus on preparing for their performance. The hours that the managers put in, that the facilities staff, the event staff, the administration all put in - these are the things that allow for a season such as the one Penn State had to occur.

And it is the passion. Seeing the genuine joy on the faces of the wrestlers when they saw one of their teammates pull off a big win. Seeing the enthusiasm as they talked about their team and the opportunity to be part of it. The genuine appreciation that transfers Aaron Nagao, Mitchell Mesenbrink and Bernie Truax showed for the opportunity they had to compete in this program and on this team is truly special. The perspective

that Beau Bartlett showed after falling in heartbreaking fashion in the NCAA finals. Listening to Aaron Brooks talk about the bigger picture and the goals beyond college after winning a fourth NCAA title.

Seeing Braeden Davis talk about how he felt he didn't compete the way he wanted to at the NAAs and vowing to be better in the future. Let the record show Davis' effort was never an issue - sometimes the results don't go your way even when you do everything you can - there is a reason wrestling is considered the most humbling of sports. These guys have a passion to win but really, the passion is in challenging themselves to be the best they can and to be part of a program that they regard as truly special and impactful.

The consistency with which this team performed and competed may be unmatched. The team went undefeated and won at least six bouts in each dual meet and won at least seven in 11 of the 12 meets this season. While the wins by the team and the individuals are truly impressive, I think the losses may actually tell the story of just how consistently great this year's team was.

Of the 27 losses the 10 postseason starters incurred throughout the year, 19 of them were to All-Americans. If you take away the two injury defaults by Carter Starocci at the Big Ten championships, that means there were six losses to non-All-Americans the entire season. Two of those six losses were to Round of 12 participants and the other four were to NCAA qualifiers who went a combined 5-8 at the NCAA tournament. The lowest seeded wrestler a Nittany Lion lost to in a contested bout was Aaron Nagao's NCAA tournament loss to 23rd-seeded Marlon Yarbrough of Virginia. All 27 losses were to NCAA qualifiers. The only losses Beau Bartlett and Mitchell Mesenbrink had all season were to the national champions at their weight class. All four of Braeden Davis' losses were to wrestlers who finished in the top six at the NCAA tournament.



## 2024 NCAA Championship Finals & Team Scores

### 2024 NCAA Championship Finals

- 125 lbs** - Richie Figueroa (Arizona State) dec Drake Ayala (Iowa) 7-2
- 133 lbs** - Vito Arujau (Cornell) dec Daton Fix (Oklahoma State) 5-3
- 141 lbs** - Jesse Mendez (Ohio State) dec Beau Bartlett (Penn State) 4-1
- 149 lbs** - Caleb Henson (Virginia Tech) maj. dec. Austin Gomez (Michigan) 15-7
- 157 lbs** - Levi Haines (Penn State) dec Jacori Teemer (Arizona State) 5-0
- 165 lbs** - David Carr (Iowa State) dec Mitchell Mesenbrink (Penn State) 9-8
- 174 lbs** - Carter Starocci (Penn State) dec Rocco Welsh (Ohio State) 2-0
- 184 lbs** - Parker Keckeisen (Northern Iowa) maj. dec. Dustin Plott (Oklahoma State) 14-5
- 197 lbs** - Aaron Brooks (Penn State) dec Trent Hidlay (NC State) 6-1
- 285 lbs** - Greg Kerkvliet (Penn State) maj. dec. Lucas Davison (Michigan) 13-4

### Final Team Scores

1. Penn State 172.5
2. Cornell 72.5
3. Michigan 71
4. Iowa State 68.5
5. Iowa 67
6. Arizona State 64.5
7. Virginia Tech 64
8. Ohio State 62
9. Nebraska 60.5
10. Oklahoma State 56



### Ironhead Lines: PSU Wrestling

*By: Jeff Byers*

There was a lot of parity in college wrestling this season and then there was the exceptional greatness of Penn State. A total of 12 points separated 2nd place Cornell from 9th place Nebraska. The Cornhuskers had the second-most All-Americans with five All-Americans. Six schools had four All-Americans and five more had three All-Americans. In all 34 schools had at least one wrestler on the podium. And only five schools had multiple finalists. Joining Penn State were Arizona State, Oklahoma State, Ohio State and Michigan with with two each. And Penn State was the only team with more than one individual champion. Arizona State, Cornell, Ohio State, Virginia Tech, Iowa State and Northern Iowa are the other teams with individual

champs this season.

Only four wrestlers finished the season undefeated and three (Levi Haines, Aaron Brooks and Greg Kerkvliet) were from Penn State (Northern Iowa's Parker Keckeisen is the other). And if not for the knee injury, it is very likely Carter Starocci would have given Penn State four of five.

I would argue that what Penn State is doing is more remarkable because of the overall parity otherwise that is in the sport. It is really difficult to be consistently great as the numbers show from this past season. But Penn State has done that under Cael Sanderson and his staff and has done so even more since 2016.

The Nittany Lions are undefeated in

eight of the last nine dual meet seasons have gone 40-3 in the NCAA semifinals and 29-11 in the finals over the last eight NCAA tournaments (there was no NCAA tournament in 2020 due to Covid). That means the Nittany Lions are averaging five finalists and over 3.6 champions per NCAA tournament over the last the last eight championships.

There are a lot of great wrestlers, great coaches and great programs that are working to bring home team titles. What this team accomplished in the 2023-24 season is truly exceptional even by the unprecedented high standard set by the program over the last nine years. Penn State fans should be basking in the gratitude shown by their favorite wrestlers and coaches.



## Hawkeyes Fly at Women's Wrestling Championships

By Deborah Lynch



With women's wrestling expanding each year, the National Collegiate Women's Wrestling Championships was a showcase for talent this year with

Division I Iowa taking the team title with 204 points, closely followed by DIII North Central Illinois with 198 points. Iowa had six individual national champions.

King, TN (D2) was in third with 163 points followed by McKendree, IL (D2) 106, Colorado Mesa (D2) 68.5, Sacred Heart, CT (D1) 61, **Lock Haven, PA (D2) 50.5**, Presbyterian, SC (D1) 50.5, Mount Olive, NC (D2) 39.5, and Wisconsin Stevens Point (D3) 38.

**Two Wyoming Seminary grads won national titles for the women** – Ava Bayless at 109 pounds for Iowa, a native of Greenville, PA; and Reese Larramendy at 143 pounds for Iowa, a native of Reno, NV. .

**PA Place-winners included:**

**109 Pounds:** Finals: Ava Bayless (Iowa, from Greenville, PA, Wyoming Seminary) dec. Kaelani Shufeldt (Lock Haven University, from Huntington Beach, CA), 2-1

**123 Pounds:** Finals: Amani Jones (North Central (IL) dec. Virginia Foad (King University, from Wyoming Seminary), 3-1

**6th Place** - Mia Macaluso of East Stroudsburg University

**136 Pounds: 4th Place** - Grace Stem of Lock Haven University

**143 Pounds:** Finals: Reese Larramendy (Iowa, Wyoming Seminary) pinned Anne Drury (King University), Fall 4:10



**170 Pounds: 7th Place** - Stella Steigler of Lock Haven University

### NAIA Championships

Among the smaller colleges that compete in the NAIA Women's Wrestling Championships, Menlo (CA) took the title at the second annual event held at the University of Jamestown (ND) by 34 points. Ten Menlo wrestlers earned All-American honors and head coach Michael Ayala was named the National Coach of the Year.

Menlo's 172 first place finish was followed by Life (GA) with 138, Southern Oregon at 134, William Penn (IA) 111.5, Grand View (IA) 106, Texas Wesleyan 98.5, Providence (MT) 90.5, Missouri Baptist 87.5, Campbellsville (KY) 54, and Cumberlands (KY) 53.

National champions at each weight were led by three champions from William Penn.

101: Stefana Jelacic of Lourdes (Ohio)

109: Mia Palumbo of William Penn (Iowa)

116: Juliana Diaz of Missouri Baptist

123: Cristell Rodriquez of Doane (Neb.)

130: Carolina Moreno of Southern Oregon

136: Adaugo Nwachukwu of William Penn

143: Jamilah McBryde of Life (Ga.)

155: Caitlyn Davis of Southern Oregon

170: Ashley Lekas of William Penn (Iowa)

191: Tavia Heidelberg -Menlo (Calif.)

### Junior High Champions

In the PA Wrestling Junior High Championships held in Johnstown, Juliet Alt of Chestnut Ridge, younger sister to Violette Lasure, a state champ as a freshman at 142 pounds, won the 150-pound weight class. Other winners included:

73 – McKenzie Astorino, Curwensville

79 - Peyton Schneck, Emmaus

85 – Brooklyn Henry, Gettysburg

91 – Xuan Graham, Southern Lehigh

98 – Madison Healey, WY Valley West

105 – Morgan Hyland, Pleasant Valley

112 – Mimi Skowronski, Seneca Valley

119 – Neve O'Byrne, Garnet Valley

127 – Nevaeh Colon, Wilson

137 – Kaelon Connolly, Sheffield

150 – Juliet Alt, Chestnut Ridge

167 – Elysbeth Myers, Brockway

202 – Evelyn Sheer, Hazelton

### PJW Champions

The 2024 PJW Girls Wrestling State Championships are by age groups:

**12U--60lb** - Mia Emili; 66 - Aubrey Kokinda; 72 - Abby Guzzo; 78 - Giada Croteau; 84 - Guilianna Latashaw; 92 - Isla Silva; 100 - Layla Namerow; 108 - Reese Montgomery; 116 - Feabie Fourspring; 125 - Camilla Hathaway; 145 - Charlie Rea.

**10U--50** - Lexi Beers; 56 - Journey Strittmatter; 63 - Murienn Bagnell; 70 - Aleeya Dreshman; 78 - Piper Full; 86 - Lennox Deringer; 94 - Briella Collins; 102 - Brinley Dinzeo; 110 - Dakota Slody; 125 - Jorja Keeney

**Postseason championships:** High school girls interested in offseason championships, specifically qualifying for Fargo in either 16U Women (born 2008-2009) or Junior Women (born Sept. 1, 2004 and after, and enrolled in Grades 9-12), can qualify at several qualifying tournaments as well as being returning All-Americans. The tournaments are the USA Women's National Championship April 12-14 in Spokane, WA; The Northeast Regionals, May 10-12 in Atlantic City, NJ; and the PAUSAW State Championships at Alvernia University May 17-19 in Reading, PA.

## Bayless Wins NCAA Title

Redshirt freshman Ava Bayless (109 lbs.) (Greenville, PA-Wyoming Sem.) of the University of Iowa women's wrestling team, won the National Collegiate Women's Wrestling Tournament. She was one of six champions as the Hawkeyes brought home the team title in their first year of the program. Bayless defeated Lock Haven's Kaelani Shufeldt 2-1.

LHU produced three All-Americans in their second year of having a women's team as Grace Stem (136) (Bald Eagle Area) placed 4th and Stella Steigler (170) placed 7th. Steigler is only a freshman, and Stem and Shufeldt are sophomores. Stem had won 18 straight matches going into the Nationals.

**Top 3 Teams:** 1. Iowa 2. North Central (IL) 3. King University (TN)

## Pennsylvania and New Jersey Wrestlers- Changing of the Guards

*column by Rick Solofsky, Special to PWN.*



The WPIAL may be trading places with Philadelphia Suburbs and North Jersey as Pennsylvania Wrestling Supremacy in the Landscape of the Northeast Corridor."

It all started Thursday

Night, March 7th. Quakertown made Wrestling history at the Pennsylvania Individual State Tournament. . .

As Pennsylvania wrestlers, prepared for the Class AA Quarterfinal round "Faith Christian Academy" had "Seven" wrestlers alive, and is tied for first place in the Team race with Bishop McCort. Most people know, Bishop McCort is home of probably one of the top two or three High School Wrestlers in the Country, Bo Bassett.

At the same time, Quakertown was tied in the class AAA quarterfinal round with two wrestlers alive in the championship bracket.

This marks the first time that Both Southeastern Pennsylvania Teams were tied for first place going into the quarterfinal round in the Pennsylvania individual state tournaments. Interesting note! Both teams are located in Quakertown Pennsylvania (20 minutes from Philadelphia (to the north) and the Lehigh Valley (to the South))...

Another historic record! This marks the first time that one team has ever had seven wrestlers, still alive in the quarterfinal round in Pennsylvania Individual Wrestling Tournament history. . . And who would have ever predicted this? Little District One! LOL (Actually, the most populated District in Pennsylvania). District 1 has spent more years, as the door mats of the state, rather than the WPIAL or Lehigh Valley of the State. And for years! Well! Times are changing. . .

Faith Christian Academy shattered the Pennsylvania Individual Team Record, when they scored 167 Team Points, 15.5 points ahead of Franklin Regionals' record set in 2015. That Franklin Regional team was led by Spencer Lee, Michael Kemmerer, Josh Shields, Devon Brown, and Josh Maruca). As all are aware, this group of studs won 3 NCAA Titles, Numerous Individuals Big Ten Champions, and were Multiple All Americans. . . Note! Last year Faith Christian Academy won the PIAA State Tournament with 7 Freshman and 4 Sophomores. This year 9 FCA wrestlers

**PWN 2023/2024**

placed, (2 state Champions, 2 Runner-ups, 1 3rd Placer, and 4 other state placewinners). All underclassmen!

Once again, at the PIAA Individual Championships, the District 11 cream rose to the top, as Bethlehem Catholic (95.5) and Nazareth (78.5) ended up first and second in the team race, each with two Individual State Champions. Shockingly, District 7, better known as the WPIAL's best team (Thomas Jefferson) finished in 9th Place! This was the first time in over 70 years that a team from the WPIAL finished no higher than 8th Place in the team race!

The weekend before the PIAA State Tournament, Delbarton (North Jersey), had "Seven" wrestlers in the finals of the NJSIAA Individual Tournament. First time in New Jersey wrestling history that this feat has been accomplished. Saint Joe's Montvale had "Five." And Get this! Possibly Five to Seven of these wrestlers from Delbarton and Saint Joe's Montvale could be headed to Cornell, Penn, Princeton, and other Ivy League Schools. Incredible!

Lake Highland Prep (Orlando Florida), was the only other program to ever have more than seven wrestlers in the finals at their individual wrestling tournament (crowning 8 State champs in 2019), prior to them moving to the National Prep Tournament in 2020.

Last weekend, I just finished officiating NJ State Tournament in Atlantic City and **If they kept team scores at NJ states, it would be Delbarton 229.5, St Joe's Montvale 226.5, Southern Regional 134.5, Christian Brothers Acad. 109.5, Bergan Catholic 92.5**

12 of the 14 State Champs in NJ are Underclassmen. No team would has ever broken 200 points at the New Jersey State tournament if they would have kept score over the years.

I was talking to some sports writers at the New Jersey State tournament. They are starting to notice that Southwestern Pennsylvania's population (Where Jody Stritmatter's Club (Young Guns) is and where Franklin Regional is located, may not be able to catch up with population growth of Southeastern Pennsylvania (Philadelphia suburbs) in the future.

Most experts even believe that Southeastern Pennsylvania will start to close the huge gap that historically existed when comparing the talent, success, and dominance that Southwestern Pennsylvania/WPIAL has held over the Philadelphia suburbs (Southeastern, Pennsylvania, better known as District One) over the past 80 plus years in the sport.

However, with the population in North

Jersey continuing to rise at a torrid pace, coupled with programs like Delbarton, St Joe's Regional, Saint Peters Prep, and Don Bosco, some experts, believe that North Jersey can compete with the top two wrestlers in each weight class in Pennsylvania Right Now! Most Wrestling Experts believe that in 2019, New Jersey's State Champions replaced Ohio as the second-best wrestling state in the nation. That year, the State of New Jersey went 6-0 in the Big Ten Finals. The six Ex-New Jersey natives were Sebastian Rivera, Northwestern, (who defeated Spencer Lee in the BIG Ten Finals that year, Nick Suriano (Rutgers), Joey McKenna (Ohio State), Anthony Ashnault (Rutgers), Myles Martin (Ohio State), and Anthony Cassar (Penn State, who defeated Gable Steveson in the BIG Ten Finals). That was the first and only time in Big Ten history that one state went 6-0 in the Big Ten Finals.

Get this, in this years' PIAA State Tournament, Only two wrestlers from the Southwestern Pennsylvania/WPIAL were seeded #1. Four Wrestlers from Southeastern Pennsylvania were seeded #1. It was the first time in PIAA history, this has ever happened at the AAA (large school ) level.

Most wrestling experts would never have thought it would ever be possible, but if you combined wrestlers from just Delbarton and St Joe's Montvale, they would beat the WPIAL All Stars. . . In fact, some believe that State Champs from just those two New Jersey schools could beat the Pennsylvania State Champs this year.

Wyoming Seminary only beat Blair Academy by three points this year. Blair Academy only beat Delbarton by three points. Delbarton only beat Saint Joe's Montvale by six points.

Hope this was helpful to you, your incredible research, and for future broadcasts. . . Keep up the great work! Thank you for your continued commitment and passion for our sport.

This was the First time in Pennsylvania History that District 1 (Philadelphia Suburbs) had more Place Winners than District 7 (SW PA) AND District 11 (Lehigh Valley) at the PA State Tournament.

**Rick Solofsky is the first NCAA Official, who has officiated the Pennsylvania & New Jersey High School State Tournaments, The Beast of the East, The Ironman, and The Reno Classic, to ever host a Wrestling Radio Show that Streams Live on ESPN Philadelphia and iHeart Radio Easton, Pennsylvania. rick@solofskyfg.com**

## Elling's Opinions



By: **Tom Elling**

As I see it...

I didn't like the three-point take-down rule when it was instituted. However, as the season wore on, I liked it more and more. There was more action and, consequently, more tech falls. I still find myself thinking 'That is TWO.' Time heals all wounds.

-I join the chorus of fans who are amazed at the record-setting Nittany Lions. Cael makes it harder and harder to beat the standards. Credit must also be given to the staff, especially Casey Cunningham and Cody Sanderson. Trainer Dan Monthley is and was an integral part of the team's success- specifically in getting **Carter Starocci** ready to win his 4th title.

-How about that **Anthony Noto from Lock Haven**? He pulled himself out of one of those funks anyone who wrestled had gone through and performed at championship caliber. I look for his picture to be hanging on the Thomas Field House walls after next season, joining the likes of Gray Simons, Gus DeAugustino, Jerry Swope, Cary Kolat, Brad Lloyd and company. I must admit I have not yet seen one of Chance Marsteller.

**-I am NOT a fan of the portal and the NIL.** The merry-go-round has already begun. To add to the disintegration, Dartmouth basketball players have formed a Union. They can now bargain with their university for anything and everything. Correct me if I'm wrong, but most are already on scholarship. Yes, I get colleges getting big tv money especially in football and basketball, but this is a long way from Jim Thorpe.

-I continue to amaze myself with my lack of skills in participating in wrestling pools. I did finish 3rd in the AWN pool. Owner/Publisher Ron Good won that one. My photo buddy Marc Billett was 4th. The fact that I beat Marc by one point will not hinder my reminding him of the finish until next season.

-I had an email from western PA sports fan/documentary producer Tony Melanson. Tony is working on a PA Girls' wrestling documentary and asked me to provide some photos, video, and insights into the status. He had already contacted three people I recommended- Brooke Zumas, Joe Satbilito and Jon Mitchell. I also contacted Jim Gibbons who has had great success with his doc "The Dual." Jim was more than willing to help, as was Jamie Moffat- author of "Wrestle Like a Girl."

**-Wade Schalles' novel "Charlotte's Gaff"** has hit the stands. His first fiction piece "Jacob's Cradle" was a huge success. I had the honor of proofreading it for Wade. I was quite amazed at his writing skills. While not as deadly as his spladle, the book combines adventure, mystery - with a backdrop of wrestling - to make it a 'can't-put-down' read.

**-Our next Central PA Wrestling breakfast is scheduled for May 8th.** It is hosted right here in Lock Haven by the Fleming-ton First Church of Christ. Our liaison Jim Bottorf is a treasure. Dick Rhoades, Lloyd Rhoades and I are busy trying to make it the best ever. We expect 200 former wrestles, coaches, fans, official and media to attend. We've had people come from Florida, Georgia, Texas, Minnesota, Michigan as well as the contiguous state around PA. We have as a mini-theme.. "Welcome, Pitt Wrestling." We've done similar for Penn State, Slippery Rock, Bloomsburg, Lehigh and Lock Haven.

**-The PA Chapter of the National Wrestling Hall of Fame** will honor Roger Barrick, Dale Cochran, Bernie Chatman, Bobby Ferraro Jr, Sammy Julian, Cathy Leibensperger, George Way, Steve Toboz Jr and Dale Derr. The date is May 5th. Contact either Joe Stabilito' joe.stab@gmail.com or Lloyd Rhoades for more information and tickets. Lloyd's email is lar2psu@gmail.com. All are special but Steve Toboz has a unique and heroic story of losing a leg under fire as he went back to an ambush in Afghanistan to rescue fellow Seals.

**-If you are not a member of "Tom's Wrestling Page" on Facebook,** I'd encourage you to request to join. It is a closed group that does not permit foul language or political posts. I also discourage excessive advertising. We have over 16,000 members with many names you'd know if you are a wrestling fan. While the page is primarily designed for Pennsylvania wrestling, we do cover wrestling in all aspects and phases. There is no charge.

-I plan on producing my annual Tom Elling's PA Wrestling Handbook another year. Last year a lot of people stepped up and helped me defray the high cost of printing and postage. I truly appreciate that as the previous two years, I had suffered losses. Last year was a break-even situation.

-The Nittany Lion Wrestling Club will once again hold a golf scramble at the Clinton County Country Club in Mill Hall. The date is May 24th. Last year's event was highly successful. I'll have more information posted on my 'Wrestling Page' as we near that date.

Take some time off.. then start to get ready for the 2024-2025 season. It will be here before you know it.

### PIAA-2A State Placewinners Third Place Matches

107	Thomas Boyce, Conwell-Egan, dec. Sam Wolford, Northern Lebanon, 1-0
114	Brock Rothermel, Line Mountain, dec. Easton Mull, Chestnut Ridge, 6-2
121	Lincoln Sledzianowski, Bishop McCort, dec. Louie Gill, Reynolds, 7-5
127	Nico Fanella, Indiana, dec. Logan Stewart, Reynolds, 3-2
133	Charlie Robson, Conwell-Egan, dec. Mason Gibson, Bishop McCort, 4-2
139	Chase Bell, Reynolds, pinned Matthew Smith, Midd-West, 2:30
145	Ryan Lawler, Bishop McDevitt, dec. Chase Hontz, Faith Christian Academy, 2-1 TB2
152	Brady Collins, Clearfield, dec. Gage Wentzel, Montoursville, 3-2
160	Devon Magro, Bishop McCort, maj. dec. Tyler Morrison, West Perry, 9-1
172	Keegan Ramsay, Notre Dame-Green Pond, dec. Hunter Hohman, Grove City, 15-14
189	Caleb Close, Bald Eagle Area, dec. Lucas Lawler, Bishop McDevitt, 6-0
215	Rowan Holmes, Somerset, dec. Jason Singer, Faith Christian Academy, 4-2
285	Mark Effendian, Faith Christian Academy, dec. Dylan Pitzer, Mount Pleasant, 4-0

## District 12 Report

### Regionals



District 12 AA And AAA wrestlers have one of the toughest Regional tournaments in the country. Every year, the best of these regions are typically on the

podium medaling at Hershey.

This year is no different, but we have a few wrestlers who punched their tickets to Hershey.

District 12 AA wrestlers that made it to states were seven from Conwell Egan Cath, 107lbs, Thomas Boyce,

114lbs Kevin Bagnell,

121lbs Jeffery Spofford,

127lbs Collin Walther,

133lbs Charlie Robson,

139lbs Steven Harris,

215lbs Dante Burns and

Girls' qualifier at 106 lbs, Julia Horger.

On the AAA side, we had two heavyweight wrestlers: Maxwell Roy from Saint Joe's Prep and Andrew Brennan from LaSalle College High.

### States

The Pennsylvania State Tournament, a battleground of the best wrestlers in the country, is renowned for its intensity and competitiveness. This reputation is not unfounded, as Pennsylvania leads the country with All-Americans in NCAA wrestling every year. To place at states in high school, or even to qualify for it, is a feat that will undoubtedly catch the attention of college coaches, underlining the significance of this tournament.

This year, we had a total of six total district 12 medalists. We had four from AA and two from AAA.

Conwell Egan Cath freshman phenom 107 lbs Tommy Boyce placed 3rd. Senior 133 Charlie Robson entered the tournament unranked in the country. Robson Consi's final match was a barn burner win, beating number 13 ranked in the country Mason Gibson Bishop McCort with a last-minute inside trip at the buzzer. Senior Dante Burns took 5th place at 215 lbs. This was Burns and Robson's second state medal.

AAA medalists were both heavyweights. Sophomore Maxwell Roy from Saint Joseph Prep took 6th, bouncing back after an earlier tough loss, and senior Andrew Brennan from LaSalle High also fought his way to the podium from an earlier loss, placing 7th.

### Ladies

Last but not least, two District 12 females made history by participating in the first-ever all-female state championship. Sophomore Julissa Ortiz of Mariana Bracetti Academy, weighing 124 lbs, lost a heart-breaker in the state finals. The match went back and forth, and Ortiz took 2nd. Conwell Egan Cath Sophomore 106 lbs Julia Horger made history twice in Hershey this year. Horger had a perfect record this year of 22-0 and went into the state tournament as the number one seed. Horger dominated her way to the finals, pinning all her opponents along the way. Horger became the first ever 107lbs state champion, beating Madilyn Enterline of Greenville 9-3

As another season ends, a new one begins for next year. Wrestlers of Freestyle and Greco strive to make their way to Fargo to get the stop sign, earning All-American. For others, the offseason lifting and wrestling will prepare them for next year's quest for the golden ticket to Hershey.

More to come from D12. Remember, if there is still time on the clock, there is still time to win. So don't quit on the Mat or in Life!

*Tim O'Toole (Timotoole@comcast.net)  
Assistant Coach Conwell Egan Catholic*



**Pictured right:**

**1. Maxwell Roy 285 lbs Saint Joe's Prep**

**2. Pictured above left:**

**Julia Horger Conwell Egan Cath 106 lb State Champion**



**Don't miss another  
PWN issue...  
Subscription  
information on page  
13**

**1 (800) 934-2867**

**(814) 944-8129**

1208 FIFTH AVENUE • ALTOONA, PA 16602

# 50th Pittsburgh Wrestling Classic "The Rose Bowl of Wrestling"

\*Featuring 30 Nationally Ranked Wrestlers \*You must be a Senior  
(Inside the AHN Arena on the campus of Peters Township High on March 30)

## United States All-Star Team 27, Pennsylvania All-Star Team 12

- 114: #2 Ayden Smith (PA) DEC #20 Abram Cline (USA), 3-1
  - 121: #4 Beric Jordan (USA) DEC #7 Louie Gill (PA), 8-3
  - 127: #4 JJ Mccomas (USA) DEC Chris Vargo (PA), 2-1 TB2
  - 133: #20 Mason Gibson (PA) DEC #7 Adrian Meza (USA), 3-1
  - 139: #3 Kyler Larkin (USA) DEC Cooper Hornack (PA), 7-6
  - 145: #4 Alex Braun (USA) F #1 Jack Consiglio (PA), 1:18
  - 152: #12 Miguel Estrada (USA) DEC #11 Ryan Garvick (PA), 12-6
  - 160: #3 Conner Harer (PA) DEC #4 Charlie Millard (USA), 10-7
  - 172: #1 Gage Wright (USA) DEC Hunter Hohman (PA), 7-4
  - 189: #3 Karson Tompkins (USA) DEC #4 Tucker Hogan (PA), 7-4
  - 215: #3 Rune Lawrence (PA) DEC #5 Max Shulaw (USA), 6-3
  - 285: #5 Koy Hopke (USA) DEC #7 Sean Kinney (PA), 4-0
- \*Gibson (Bishop McCort HS) won the "OW"**



## WPIAL All-Star Team 27, New Jersey All-Star Team 19

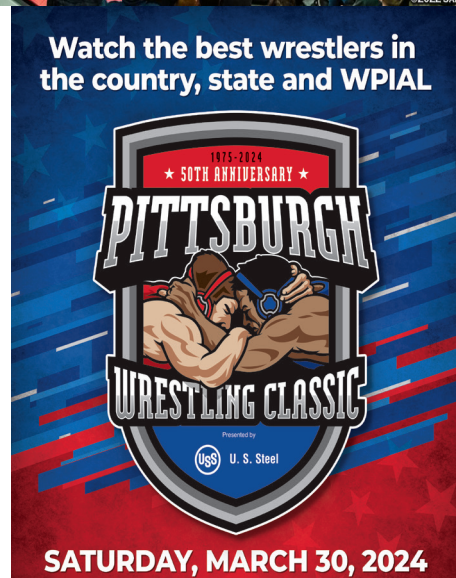
- 114: #16 Tyler Hagensen (NJ) DEC Jorden Williams (WPIAL), 2-0
  - 121: Tyler Kapusta (WPIAL) DEC Logan Brzozowski (NJ), 4-3
  - 127: #16 Andrew Binni (WPIAL) MD Sawyer Ostroff (NJ), 9-0
  - 133: Mason Kernan (WPIAL) MD Nick Balella (NJ), 14-1
  - 139: Jack Myers (NJ) MD Gaven Suica (WPIAL), 13-2
  - 145: #9 Logan Rozynski (NJ) F Hayden Coy (WPIAL), 1:03
  - 152: Eli Carr (WPIAL) MD Jeremy Quezada (NJ), 12-2
  - 160: John Quinonez (NJ) DEC Isaiah Pisano (WPIAL), 3-2
  - 172: Bodie Morgan (WPIAL) MD Ed Terreri (NJ), 8-0
  - 189: Tyler Bienus (NJ) DEC Nathan Campbell (WPIAL), 5-0
  - 215: Juliano Marion (WPIAL) DEC Brad Birch (NJ), 4-0
  - 285: Brenan Morgan (WPIAL) TF Luke Abilio (NJ), 19-3
- \*Kernan (Bethel Park HS) won the "OW"**


## Ohio Girls All-Star Team 39, PA Girls All-Star Team 19

- 100: Chloe Dearwester (OH) F Madilyn Enterline (PA) 1:08
- 106: Ava Miller (OH) F Natalie Handy (PA) 0:36
- 112: Isabella Baccio (PA) DEC Raegan Briggs (OH) 7-5
- 118: Ana Malovich (PA) MD Addison Rudolph (OH) 11-2
- 124: Eliana White-Vega (PA) F Sienna Sanborn (OH) 0:15
- 130: Jaydyn McKinney (OH) F Shannon Govern (PA) 0:34
- 136: Rita Carey (OH) F Sara Shook (PA) 2:33
- 142: Morgan Edwards (PA) F Jesse Foebar (OH) 4:24
- 148: Kylee Tait (OH) DEC Marissa Rumsey (PA) 4-2 (SV)
- 155: Meghan Werbrich (OH) DEC Leyna Rumpler (PA) 9-5
- 170: Mia Gaetjens (OH) DEC Avry Ryhal (PA) 3-2
- 190: Savannah Isaac (OH) F Alyssa Favara (PA) 0:42

**\*Ana Malovich (Butler) won the "OW"**

<https://www.papowerwrestling.com/pittsburgh-wrestling-classic/>



 Ciocca Volkswagen  
of State College

3220 W. College Avenue, Building 2  
State College, PA 16801

814-206-0902  
[www.volkswagenstatecollege.com](http://www.volkswagenstatecollege.com)



**Don't miss another issue...  
SUBSCRIBE TO PWN  
on page 13**

# Starocci Wins W.A.T Award

By Joe Baranik

Last year, I started the W.A.T. Award which stands for Wrestling-Artistry-Toughness! Most wrestlers when they start out in the sport rely on their strength to win. They know a couple of moves, but usually use no set-ups and just power their way to victory. The longer you wrestle, the more you realize the intricacies of the technique and how important set ups, angles, lowering your level, position and footwork are to beat a good opponent. The Cambridge Dictionary defines artistry as the special skills possessed by someone who has the ability to make art, such as in writing, music, sport, etc. Plus, wrestlers invented “break dance” with the hip heist drill, so we are definitely artist!

When you encompass all of the technique, creativity, movement, agility, strength and cardio that goes into the sport of wrestling, it is a true “ART!” Every year, Virginia Tech appropriately wrestles at least one dual meet at the Arts Center on campus. Add the toughness it takes to wrestle, and you have the Wrestling Artistry Toughness Award, or “WAT” Award. Jaxon Joy of Wadsworth High School in Ohio, who won two state titles, told AWN High School Insider Columnist Bob Preusse when he asked why he wrestles? “The creativity of it.” “Every wrestler is different. Any kid can be good no matter what their size is, so just the art of perfecting your techniques and stuff like that is what drives me to get better every day.”

This year will be the second year of the W.A.T. Award.

Last year’s winner was **Vito Arujau** of Cornell. No one can argue how he put on a show in defeating two of our sport’s elite in back-to-back matches at 133 lbs in the NCAAs, defeating Daton Fix of Oklahoma State and Roman Bravo-Young of Penn State.

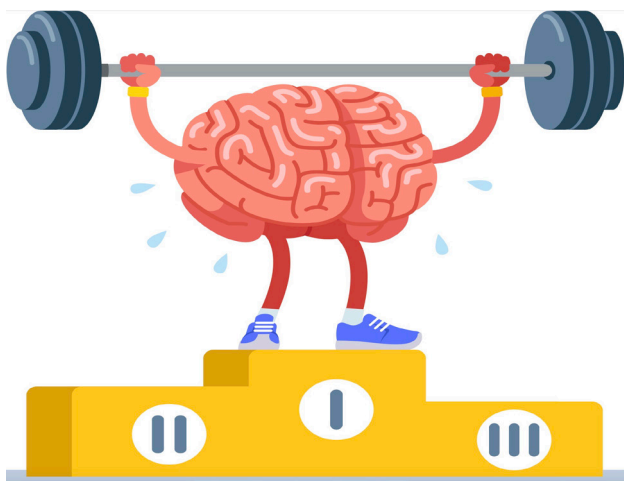
Well this year, **Carter Starocci** had to use the Marine Motto “Improvise, Adapt and Overcome.” He injured his right knee in the last dual meet of the season on Feb. 25 and didn’t wrestle a live bout for 26 days. He defaulted out of the Big 10 Championships and was under enormous pressure to compete as the No. 9 seed at the NCAAs as he tried to win his 4th straight NCAA title. Starocci had to change his offensive-minded strategy to a defensive game plan and basically wrestle with one leg.

I felt going into the NCAAs, Starocci may win a few matches, and with some luck, finish as an All-American, especially as a No. 9 seed. However, he amazed me, as he shut out his last three opponents, including two former NCAA Champions in a row, to win his 4th title! This, with more tape on his knee than Brooks has bonus point wins, and a big bulky knee brace on his right leg. Kudos to Carter, he had to dig deep and find a way to win #4. The PA kid makes us all proud!

\*photo credit to Dan Wallenberg, Ohio St. Athletics

Caption: Starocci defeated fellow Pennsylvanian, Rocco Welsh of Ohio St. 2-0 in the NCAA finals at 174 lbs.

## Off-Season is the Perfect Time for Brain Training



**Optimized Wrestling System**  
*The Future of Competitive Wrestling*

[owswin.com](http://owswin.com)



**Don't miss another issue...**  
**SUBSCRIBE TO PWN**  
**on page 13**

# RESILITE CLASSIC MATS: A WRESTLING LEGEND



*The legacy of Resilite Classic Mats speaks volumes about their quality and effectiveness. Designed and crafted with meticulous attention to detail, these mats are the epitome of Resilite's commitment to excellence in manufacturing sports mats. Our Classic Mats are not only a symbol of resilience but also a testament to the unrivaled standards of quality and durability that make them the go-to choice for the wrestling community.*



MADE  
IN  
AMERICA



[www.resilite.com](http://www.resilite.com) | 1.800.843.6287



# DEFENSE<sup>®</sup>

SOAP



Defend What You Have Built.



[DEFENSESOAP.COM](http://DEFENSESOAP.COM)

OFFICIAL PARTNER OF  
**FLOWRESTLING**