

No Cigars For Wrestlers In Tourney

by BOB SELIGMAN
SPORTS EDITOR

Jim Howard and his crew went to Brockport last weekend to take the SUNY Wrestling Championship back to Laker country, a territory that has in past years known the warmth of the team title. Instead they came away without the crown, without an individual champion for the first time in the fourteen years of the tourney, and with the knowledge (shared by virtually everyone except one referee) that Ed Pucci had been severely rooked out of a possible championship in the 158 pound class. They also knew that Brockport was a team far superior to anyone.

Despite a high quality of wrestling the tournament was partially marred by bad refereeing, bad seedings, and confusion on Friday night. The confusion centered around the status of certain grapplers as far as whether or not they would partake in the first round of the wrestle backs. (A wrestle back occurs when a man has been beaten early and does not have a chance to win then enters a different bracket and has a chance to wrestle his way back to third place.) Oswego's Tim Law, Dan Catorisano, Paul Westfield, and Steve English were scheduled to meet opposition in this first wrestle back round but some coaches said that they didn't want men who had already gone to the mat twice Friday night to go back a third time, before Saturday. That was the case for opponents of Law and Catorisano. Westfield and English did go again that night as both they and their opponents had only wrestled once.

Tony LaValle was the Laker hope in the 118 pound class and Tony made it to the finals before losing in the last few seconds. LaValle got past Albany's Walter Katz in his first match before meeting top seeded Al Solomon of Geneseo. Solomon had a regular season record of 15 wins and nothing else. Both battled evenly throughout the three periods and LaValle, with the aid of an early escape in the third period of regulation wrestling, tied it at 2-2 and the match went into overtime. Tony got the edge early in the initial overtime period with a two point takedown. After Solomon escaped at the onset of the second extra period (there are three one minute overtime periods) LaValle took him down again and was in command. He then waited for Solomon to make a mistake. Solomon did take to the offensive and started shooting but Tony was more than equal to the task. His defense was superb and in the end Solomon had his first loss of the season, 5-2, while LaValle was in the finals against Pete Berti of Binghamton.

The first period of the finale was a scoreless affair. Both men were feeling each other out. LaValle looked like he was ready to take the offensive but couldn't get desired position for any complete forward thrusts. In the second stanza LaValle was in the down position but escaped 47 seconds into the period to take a 1-0 lead. He increased it to 3-0 with 31 seconds remaining when he went for Berti's legs and got a duck under takedown. Berti got within two early in the third period when he escaped LaValle's grasp. He then tied the proceedings with 1:07 left with a takedown. LaValle got the lead back 16 seconds later when Berti was penalized one point for not moving up his hold on Tony's legs. (A wrestler is allowed to hold the legs without moving the grip up for no more than 15 seconds.)

With the lead in hand and victory not far away two things came into play. One was that LaValle had to stay off his back. Another was to stay away from Berti for just a few more seconds or else the possibility of Berti getting one point for riding time would become reality. Unfortunately it was not in the cards. Berti got LaValle on his back and into a double arm bar, which is a favorite pinning hold of Jim Howard

Tony didn't get pinned but he did give up a two point near fall at the buzzer (even though it could have been called a few seconds earlier) and with the riding time point Berti emerged a 6-4 winner.

Oswego's Bob Albrecht was the defending champion in the 126 pound class but he did not repeat. After having a tougher time than expected with Buffalo State's Tom Nizol in the quarter finals "Bones" met Brockport's Abe Lang in the semi's. The pair went through the three regular periods tied at one apiece and the match went into overtime. From then on it was strictly defensive. Albrecht never got the position he really wanted to and whenever he tried for a takedown Lang was ready. His slight control of Albrecht got him no points but it also kept Bob from scoring. The final decision went to the board of three referees. After deliberations that seemed endless the prime ref said "Nice match, boys" and raised the hand of Lang. While it is a shame to see a defending champ lose his crown in this matter there was no doubt about the decision. Lang went on to win the crown by beating Oneonta's Octavis Jones 5-2 in overtime.

The seedings hurt Oswego's 134 pound Carl Carrozza as he was put in the same bracket with Brockport's Dave Foxen, the defending champion. Carrozza played demolition derby with Albany's Ethan Grossman 17-0 before running into Foxen. Foxen played takedown and escape with Carl as he let him escape so he could get him back on the mat. The final was 18-6 only because Foxen couldn't pin Carrozza. In the finals Foxen put away Rick Wilce of Binghamton in 5:46 to defend his title and gain the distinction of being the most valuable wrestler. Carrozza finished fourth.

The luck of the draw was not with Tim Law as the 142 pounder had to go against Brockport's Tom Maddock in his first match. After a scoreless first period Maddock got on the board with an escape and the one point move held up through the stanza. In the third period Law paid back the escape favor but Maddock got the advantage once again with a takedown. Law quickly escaped again and was down by one. The seconds started to tick against Tim and he had to try for a fast takedown. He never was able to get as low as he wanted to as Maddock was tough enough to meet Tim's thrusts. Overall it was a defensive match of high quality that saw the one point hold up and Maddock won 3-2. After the match was over and he was relaxed Law said that he expected Maddock to take it all. Tim proved to be a prophet when the man from Brockport defeated Larry Mims of Albany in the 142 finale. In the wrestle back Law was beaten 1-0 in overtime by Ed Cerar of Binghamton.

Dan Catorisano came out flying against Albany's Ken Knickmeyer and put him away in 2:50 with that old favorite, the double arm bar. It was the first pin, at that time, of the tourney. In his next match Catorisano was the victim of the takedown-escape-takedown etc. game with Brockport's John Martellucci and finished on the short end of a 10-3 verdict. Martellucci emerged as the 150 pound champ when he defeated top seeded Dave Berry of Binghamton 5-3. Catorisano finished out of the money.

In his opening 158 pound match Laker Ed Pucci gave no mercy to Oneonta's Bill Brundage. With the aid of three, three point nearfalls Pucci moved ahead 11-0 before finally putting both of Brundage's shoulders flat in 3:12. In his next encounter Pucci was himself given a verdict of no mercy by the referee when he faced Walt Weiler of Binghamton.

Pucci got into trouble early when he tried to takedown Weiler but instead, on two occasions, got taken down himself. The second takedown led to a two point nearfall and Pucci was down 7-0 as the second period ended. Ed

finally got it going in the third when he escaped Weiler for one point. A second point was awarded Pucci shortly thereafter when Walt was called for stalling. However, time was starting to run short and Pucci needed points in a huge hurry. He got four of them in one move with a beautiful takedown that led to a nearfall situation. Weiler was in trouble and he knew it. After getting out of the nearfall predicament but not out of Pucci's grasp he seemed to feign injury and the match was halted. When action resumed Ed again was on the attack but overdid it and was penalized one didget for an illegal hold. With time still running short Pucci had to go for a pin or nearfall. As the buzzer approached he did exactly what he had to do and got Weiler on his back and one shoulder squarely on the mat. The ref went down on his stomach and took a good look yet he didn't call the deserved two point situation. A riding time point was of little consolation as Pucci got beaten by the ref 8-7.

In the wrestlebacks Pucci finished third when he defeated Chris Johnson of Potsdam 6-4. Weiler went on to the finals but not even a referee could keep him from losing 4-1 to Brockport's (who else) Lee Finch.

Paul Westfield was seemingly the first sacrifice for number one seed Mike Polakoff of Binghamton. In the end, though, it was Polakoff who escaped with his life. Polakoff was unable to complete any takedowns in the first period even though he could have many times. Westfield just hung tough and prevented any points. Polakoff did get two with a reverse early in the second stanza but Westfield pulled off a beautiful escape to make it 2-1. Another Polakoff takedown put him 30 seconds before the period ended. In the third Westfield was in the down position and tried to escape but couldn't while it looked like he could at a few junctures Polakoff finally tied up Paul and there was nothing he could do about it. The riding time point made the final 5-3. Westfield then had a let down in his next match and was decisoned 3-1 by Cortland's John Libby. The champion was another Brockporter, Frank Calabrio. He beat Polakoff 12-4 to wear the crown.

Tony Companion, in reality a 167 pound man, pulled a surprise by getting to the finals of the 177 class. Tony had one match on Friday night and he made it a good one by recording one of the fastest falls in the competition, half nelsoning Tim Murphy of Geneseo in 1:37. On Saturday Companion won by default over Binghamton's Greg Reilly when Reilly re-injured a previously sore neck. In the finals the fairy tale ended as Tony found the discomfort of the cradle of Brockport's Greg Bruns and was put away in 4:54.

Dennis Luzon made it to the finals in the 190 pound division but wound up as another Laker who came close but got a whiff instead of the full cigar. Denny got to his plateau by decisioning Jim Lore of Oneonta (6-1) and Albany's Don Mion (6-3) before meeting Rich Molbury of Potsdam. It was a match of two rough riders and in the end, Molbury got the better of it. The match was scoreless through two periods but Molbury was piling up a big riding time advantage. In the second period he rode Luzon for the entire three minutes. In the third go around Molbury reversed Denny early for two and went back to riding. The extra point made the final 3-0.

There isn't much you can say about the performance Steve English gave in the heavyweight division except that it was poor. English didn't make point gaining moves when he could have and ended his participation without scoring a point in two matches. The big men's class was won by crowd pleasing (in one way or another) by massive Rudy Vido of Albany who defended his title by beating up Mac Tyndall