

THE TEAM TITLE — WHO'S NO. 1?

By Neil Kerr

Once again Central New York is serving as host for the New York State Intersectional Wrestling Meet and if this year's 13th annual tournament is similar to last year's exciting event, you will be witnessing superb individual and team competition.

Those of you who were in attendance last March will recall that the closest Sectional team point race in history took place, with section Eleven (Suffolk County, L.I.) finally winning with 98½ points. Then, in a tightly-bunched pack, came Sections Five (Rochester area) with 97, Section Six (Western New York) at 93½, Section Three (Central New York) with 88½, Section Four (Binghamton-Ithaca area) at 87 and Section Eight (Nassau County, L.I.) with 81.

The victory by Section Eleven enabled Long Island representatives to continue their glittering record at the expense of their Upstate cohorts. At the previous 12 Intersectional Tournaments, athletes from Sections Eight and Eleven have provided the team champion on eight occasions. The only breakthroughs in the struggle for team titles occurred when Section Four (Southern Tier) won in 1965 and 1969, and when Section Three triumphed in 1970 and 1973.

However, as evidenced by last year's close six-team struggle, Long Island is no longer dominating New York State wrestling as was the case in the pre-1970 years.

This weekend, the sections that loom as the pre-tourney co-favorites appear to be defending champion Eleven and the Southern Tier's Section Four. Eleven's potent lineup is headed by the Huntington duo of Mike Picozzi at 105 and returning Intersectional king Jeff Thomas at 112 plus Suffolk tourney "MVP" Mike Siehien of Brentwood Ross at 132 pounds.

Section Four sports possible finalists in precocious 105-pound sophomore (62-1-1) Mark Iacovelli of Ithaca plus 126-pound senior Kurt Kaminsky of Binghamton North.

If those two regions falter, look for Sections Three, Five, Six and Eight to again rate as the leading challengers.

The gold-garbed host team is led by Intersectional Meet repeaters George Medina of Baldwinsville at 119 pounds, Bruce Porter of South Jefferson at 167 and defending State 250-pound champion Dan Lang of Baldwinsville at 250.

Section Five boasts last year's "Most Outstanding Wrestler" trophy-winner, Frank DeAngelis of Spencerport at 138 pounds. He has won his last 61 bouts over three seasons and is aiming to capture four more here in the War Memorial. The Rochester team also points to 145-pound Dave Juergens of Hilton and 215-pound Mike Pochalski of Irondequoit as top title threats.

Section Six is again anchored by representatives from the defending School champion, Pioneer Central. Coach Dick Post's powerful Pioneer "pinmen" are captained by 155-pound Keith Stearns, who merits watching. He has a 34-0 record this season, with an amazing 33 pins!

Section Eight's finest are likely to be 119-pound Steve Cavayero of Bellmore Kennedy, 132-pound Eric Wolfson of Calhoun, 138-pound Scott Arnel of Westbury and 215-pound Jackie Robinson of Roosevelt.

All eleven New York State sections are again represented and Central New York wrestling followers bid welcome to all our fellow mat enthusiasts.

Among the competitors this weekend are three defending champions — Huntington's Jeff Thomas, Spencerport's Frank DeAngelis and Baldwinsville's Dan Lang. Thomas triumphed at 96 a year ago but is returning at 112. DeAngelis again occupy the 138 and Lang the 250-pound divisions.

In the team category, impressive win streaks are currently possessed by perennial New York State powers Union-Endicott—4 (59), Baldwinsville—3 (47), Horseheads—4 (33), Pioneer—6 (32), Peru—7 (30) and Schenectady Niskayuna—2 (27). Recently, the lengthy 79-dual meet streak owned by Coach Joe Campo's fine Brentwood Ross—11 team was snapped, 22-18, by Half Hollow Hills in a Suffolk County showdown. All of those teams, with the exception of Horseheads, are sending at least one athlete to Syracuse.

Again this year, no pre-meet seedings have been issued, with pairings being drawn from a hat. This practice is the fairest possible although it does mean, of course, that two or three top wrestlers in a weight class could be placed in the same bracket. For that reason, "wrestlebacks" were introduced into the meet three years ago.

To the outstanding wrestler will go a trophy, awarded jointly by the New York State Sports Writers' Association and the New York State Wrestling Coaches' Association, for the sixth straight year. The previous winners were 215-pound Mike Phillips of Cooperstown—3 in 1970, 145-pound John Cuyler of Elmira Free Academy—4 in 1971, 177-pound Dwight Cartwright of Keshequa—5 in 1972, 177-pound Greg Stevens of Fulton—3 in 1973 and 138-pound Frank DeAngelis of Spencerport—5 last March.

Of that group, Stevens has enjoyed the finest collegiate career. He had compiled a record of 22-6 at 190 pounds as a member of the nation's No. 1 team, Iowa University (17-0-1) as of last weekend.

Today, to all teams and wrestlers, we in Central New York extend our congratulations for having earned a trip to the New York State Intersectional Tournament. Good luck, and we hope that you enjoy your state finals, win or lose.

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SOURCE: 1975 NYS Wrestling Tournament Program