

THE ER SPARK: Romeo Battazzi's habit of coming up with the key victory early in the match for East Rochester's wrestling team continued Saturday night. His decision over defending sectional champ Chris Kellman of Hilton in the 119-pound match opened the door for the Bombers' 30-13 win in the East-West championship match at Hilton.

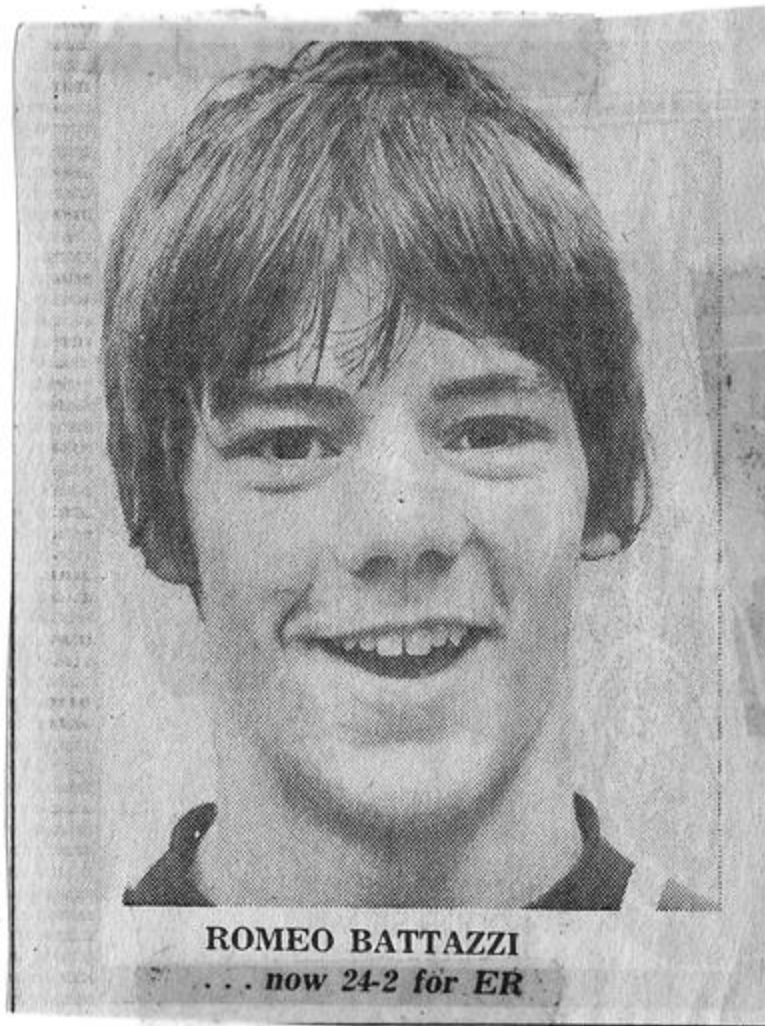
"That was the turning point," ER coach Don Quinn said. "When one of your studs gets beat, it can take a lot out of you. They knew we had the upper weights. They couldn't afford to lose any of the lightweight matches."

Two weeks ago, Battazzi came up with a similar win against Olean's Andy Taylor as ER stunned the then-No. 1 team in the state. Taylor, like Kellman, had beaten Battazzi a year ago.

"Romeo's much improved this year," Quinn says. "He gives us a stopper in the lower weights, where you've got to have one. If you're stoppers are too high in the lineup, it might be too late."

Battazzi's victory raised his overall record to 24-2. He's won the Monroe County, Canandaigua and Sweet Home tournaments, losing only to McQuaid's Rob Starkweather and to Canandaigua's Matt King, a loss he later avenged.

The romp over Hilton raised ER's record to 13-2. The Bombers justified their No. 3 ranking in the state behind Syracuse-area power Baldwinsville and Huntington of Long Island.



ROMEO BATAZZI

... now 24-2 for ER