

# Biggie: Baiamonte vs. Zito

By TOM BATZOLD

It's almost been taken for granted that East Rochester's John Zito has a spot locked up in the state wrestling tournament.

Several college recruiters, anxious for another opportunity to watch the unbeaten 167-pound senior, have already made arrangements to be in Syracuse next week. In fact, Zito will be featured in the tournament program.

To get to Syracuse, though, he first has to win the Section 5 qualifier at RIT this weekend. To most people, that's sounds like a mere formality, but not to McQuaid's Vince Baiamonte.

"He's probably the best wrestler in the state but I like my chances," Baiamonte says confidently. "For the last month, all I've thought about was wrestling against him and it's really psyched me up. I've had pins in my last 10 bouts."

Baiamonte, a senior, brings a 25-2 record into the qualifier. His only losses were to ER heavy-weight Rick Sidor early in the season and Athena's Mike Paternoster, whom he pinned in the Class AAA finals last weekend.

Zito, now a gaudy 30-0, won another Class A title to go along with the gold medal he won at the Empire Games last summer. A year ago, he was the runnerup in the state tournament, losing his only match of the season in the finals.

"Most people don't wrestle well against him because they're thinking about who he is instead of just going out and doing their best," Baiamonte says. "I'm not scared at all, but I think it'll be hard to sleep on Friday night."

Barring a major upset, Baiamonte and Zito should meet in the finals of the qualifier on Saturday night. They haven't met this season but Zito won a pair of matches against Baiamonte last summer.

"He beat me in the Empire Games qualifier and again at the Games but both matches were pretty close," Baiamonte says. "I'm confident now. He's got everything to lose while most people don't expect me to win."

"I just hope he comes to wrestle," Zito says. "I think I've got it over him in strength but a lot of the guys I've faced this year have tried to stall, just to keep it close."

The qualifier begins tomorrow night at 5:30 with the finals scheduled to begin at 7 p.m. Saturday at RIT. Here's a look at the other weight classes:

**91 Pounds** — Canandaigua's sensational eighth grader **Tim Mincer** (27-1) is the heavy favorite. His only loss was to a Buffalo wrestler. Darkhorses are Spencerport sophomore **Andy Komarek** (15-3-2) and Franklin's **Clarence Brown**, a 1-point loser to Komarek in the Class AAA finals last week.

**98 Pounds** — Penfield junior **Larry Kane** (28-0) certainly isn't any 98-pound weakling. Probably the guy with the best chance for an upset is Madison's **Silas Ussery**, the Class AA champ.

**105 Pounds** — Irondequoit's determined sophomore **Tony Coltroneo** (29-0) has been a machine this season, pinning 18 opponents and stopping Spencerport's **Trevor Graham** (16-3) in the AAA finals. Two sleepers to watch: Canandaigua's **Don Jones** (19-4) and Geneseo's **Dana Richard**.



Zito

... unbeaten in 30



Baiamonte

... a 25-2 record

**112 pounds** — McQuaid senior **Rob Starkweather** (27-1) went to the states at 105 last year but he faces a dogfight to get back to Syracuse. Spencerport's **Carl Tandoi**, who surprised Starkweather in a dual meet, Fairport's **Bob Arao** and Canandaigua's **Ron Jones** all have a shot.

**119 pounds** — If could come down to a rubber match between East Rochester's **Romeo Battazzi** (27-2) and Canandaigua's **Matt King** (29-1), who have split in two meetings earlier this season, also highly-regarded are Spencerport's **John San Fillippo** (18-4) and Hilton's **Chris Kellman**, who's status is clouded by a neck injury.

**126 pounds** — Spencerport's **Rory Legacy** (18-2) has shaken off a mysterious internal ailment and is the logical choice to make a return trip to the states. Possible spoilers are Brighton's **Steve Levine** and Livonia's **Scott Thompson**.

**132 pounds** — Joe Morone's victory over Hilton's previously-unbeaten **Al Rossner** last weekend wasn't a complete shock. The Edison senior (22-1) won a bronze medal at the Empire Games last summer and looks like the favorite here. Along with Rossner, other possibilities are ER sophomore **Joe Walczyk** (24-6-2) and York's **Dave Vasciannie**.

**138 pounds** — Make Canandaigua's **Mark King** (29-2) a slight favorite but don't count out Fairport's **Scott Gillman** and Geneseo's **Paul Richard** or possibly Gates **Mike LaRocca**, who was pinned by Gillman last week. Brockport's **John Irvine**, the AA runnerup, has been scratched because of an elbow injury.

**145 pounds** — Brockport's **Tony Bruno** (30-0) just takes 'em one at a time but the road gets tougher in his bid to return to Syracuse. He has to contend with Mynderse's **Steve Kelly** (22-1 and unbeaten against Section 5 competition), **Todd Read** of York, who was second last year, and Spencerport's **Bob McMullen** (23-3), whose only Section 5 loss in a dual meet against Bruno.

**155 pounds** — Another tough, wide-open class. Pick between McQuaid's **Lem Rogers** (27-1, only loss to Zito), ER's **Dennis Essom** (29-1-2 after losing his first match of the season) and always-dangerous **Gary Bullis** (25-1) of Mynderse, who injured his knee in a 9-3 loss to Essom last week.

**167 pounds** — If Zito doesn't win, stop the presses.

**177 pounds** — At this point in the season, every match gets tougher. Just ask McQuaid's **Phil Lanzatella** (28-0) who pinned **Mark Everts** two weeks ago but had to go into triple-overtime to win last week against the Brighton senior. Darkhorse picks: Livonia's **Ron Kidder** and Victor's **Tim West**.

**Heavyweight (215 pounds)** — Most people agree Newark's super sophomore **Bob Buffon** (25-1) has everything going for him. The shortbut surprisingly quick Buffon will have a 30-pound weight advantage over his toughest challenger, Irondequoit's **Jon Campo** (24-3).

**Superheavyweight (250 pounds)** — Fairport's **Wally Vaughan** (26-0) and ER's **Rick Sidor** (20-2) may be on another collision course. Both of Sidor's losses have been close decisions to Vaughan but a change in strategy could turn the tables this time. That is, if Newark's **John Zehr** (17-2, both losses outside Section 5) doesn't pull a surprise of his own.