

HIGH SCHOOL WRESTLING

Marion foils Falcons' bid

Salamone's win lifts Black Knights to 28-24 win and third straight title

By CHRIS MARQUART

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OID — Through the luck of the draw, all the pressure fell on the narrowest shoulders of anyone on Marion's wrestling team.

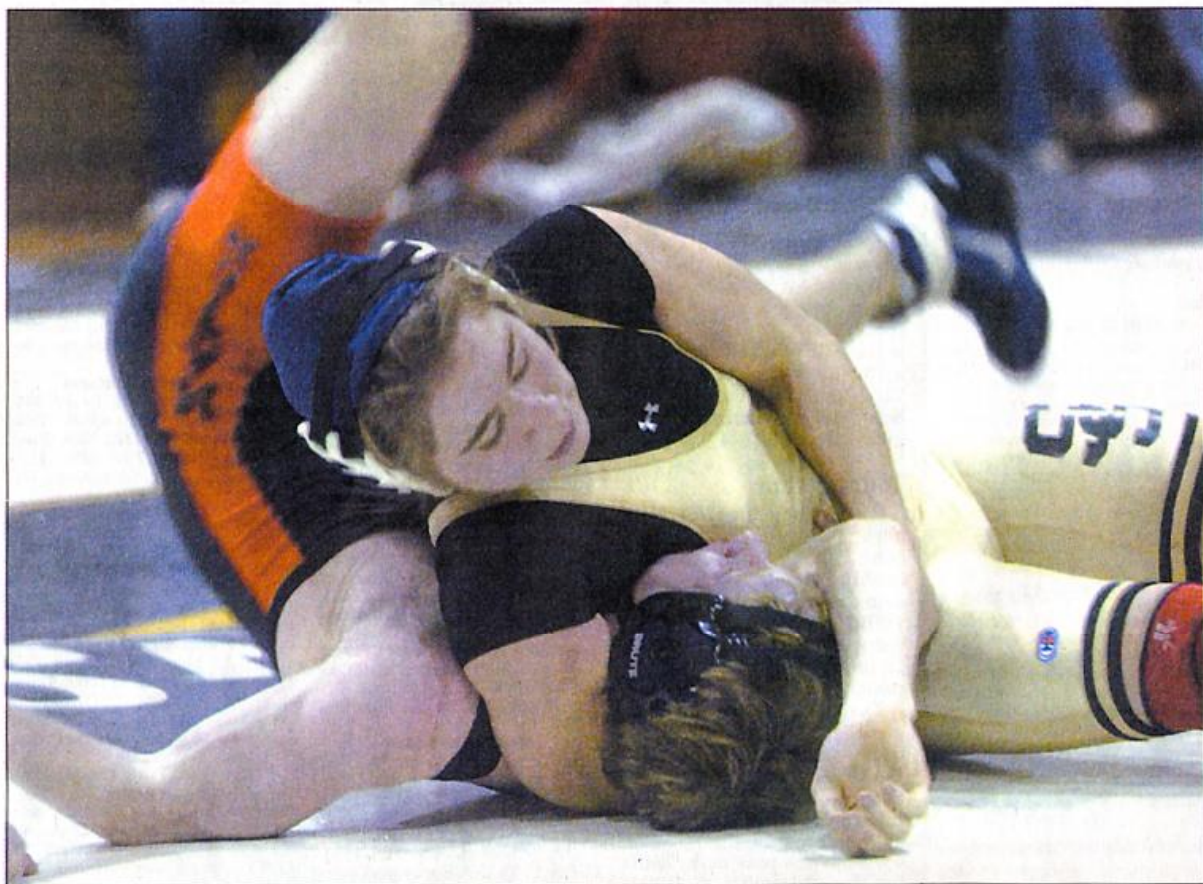
Black Knights 103-pounder Mitch Salamone needed to put at least three team points on the board Thursday night. If he didn't, Marion's two-year reign as Finger Lakes West champion would be over.

Salamone delivered, wrestling to a 5-1 decision over Cody Budd. It reduced host South Seneca's lead from 24-19 to 24-22. South Seneca was going to forfeit the 112-pound class to Matt Hasbrouck, meaning Salamone's victory essentially clinched a 28-24 triumph.

"I was nervous going in," Salamone said. "I knew I had to be smart and wrestle with my head."

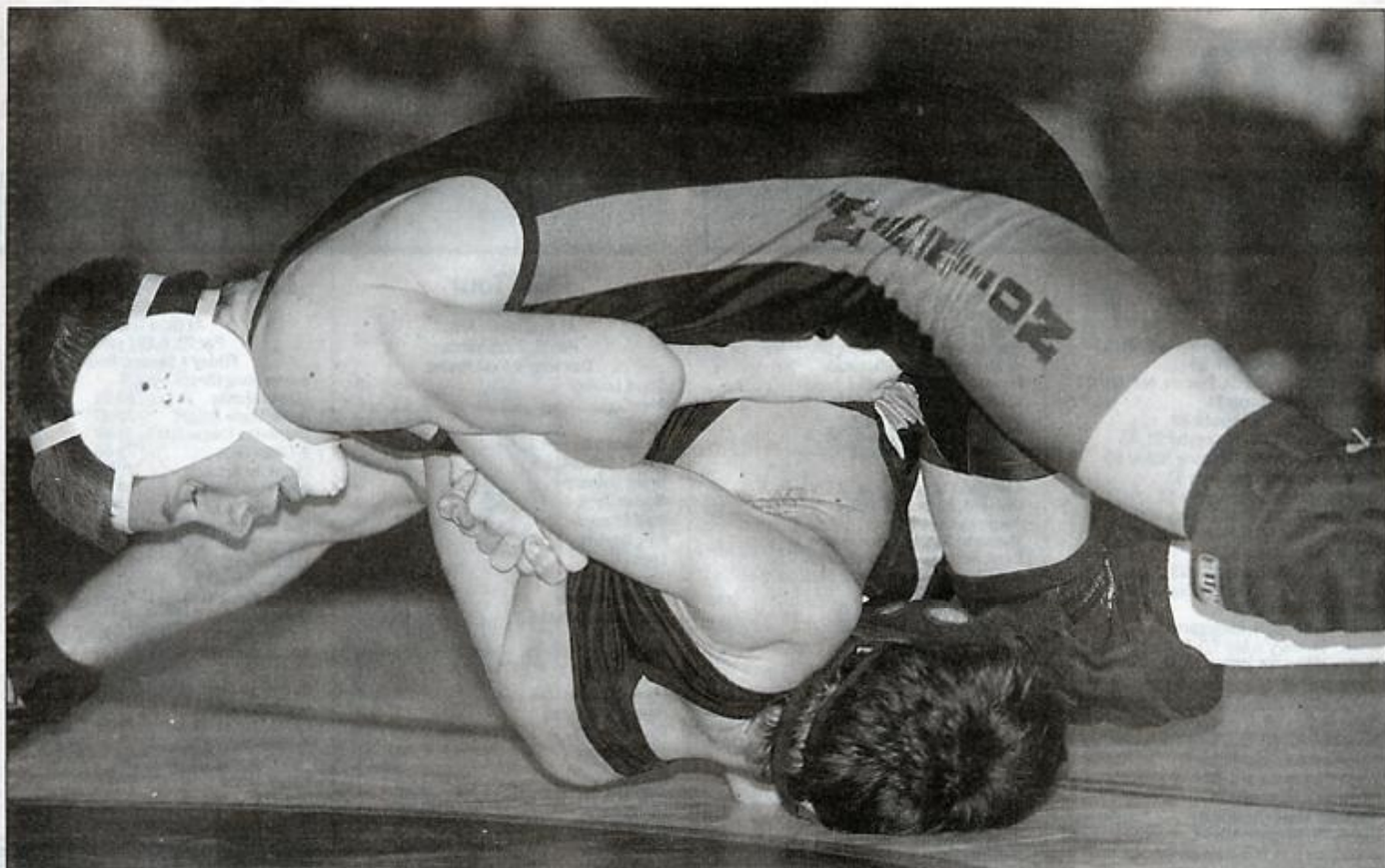
"This is big," said Marion coach Tim Bantle of his program's third consecutive league crown. "We're trying

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Spencer Tulis / Finger Lakes West

Moments after she was nearly pinned, South Seneca 125-pounder Megan Wech turned the tables on Marion's Chris Bowerman and earned six points.



Spencer Tullis / Finger Lakes Times

Marion 119-pounder Josh Mayville worked South Seneca's John Marsh onto his back. Mayville's pin opened Thursday's Finger Lakes West clash, which Mayville and the Black Knights won 28-24.

MARION

South Seneca gives three-time FL West champs all they can handle in 28-24 defeat

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to build a program. Every wrestler put their heart into it. It's one of those matches where you feel bad that a team has to lose."

Marion's Josh Mayville tried to set the tone for the contest when he secured a 45-second pin over John Marsh. South Seneca 125-pounder Megan Wech responded, pinning Chris Bowerman in 1:47. Bowerman seemed poised to pin Wech when she flipped Bowerman onto his back and pinned him soon thereafter.

At 1:30, Nick Hasbrouck pushed Marion (15-3, 5-0 FL West) ahead 10-6 with an 11-3 decision over Stephen Erickson.

The Falcons (5-7, 4-1), showing no signs of backing down, answered with consecutive decision triumphs from Joe Severson, Zach Straub and Dean Erickson.

"We had them beat," Falcons coach John Barkee said. "A lot of people weren't expecting us to challenge Marion. I've been telling the

kids we were going to beat them."

Severson made it 10-9 with a 7-2 verdict against Randy VanHall; Straub picked up a 6-1 decision over Peter Sargent; and Dean Erickson decided Cyle Gaziano 6-2.

Gaziano's brother, Caley, stopped the Falcons' surge with a 4-3 overtime win against R.J. Mateo. Caley Gaziano was awarded a penalty point in the first period. Mateo scored a takedown to lead 2-1, but Gaziano escaped to tie it. Both grapplers picked up violation points in the third period. Thirty seconds into overtime, Mateo dropped low on Gaziano, attacking the leg. Gaziano laid out while grappling for leverage. Seemingly poised for the decisive takedown, Mateo's foot hit Gaziano's head. The referee awarded a penalty point to Gaziano, ending the match.

"We had that won. It was a terrible call," Barkee said. "In any sport, you have to

play against the referee. [The match] was out of our hands. [The referee] beat us tonight."

After Nic Mayville pocketed a forfeit at 160, Marion was ahead 19-15. South Seneca posted another three-win streak to move back in front.

Joe McCheyne won 171, besting Steve Brannan 7-3. Brian Jennings took 189 with a 7-4 win over James Bond. Ken Landers scored a 2-1 decision over Tim Casper at 215. South Seneca led 25-19.

"They were big," Barkee said. "Our guys at 189 and 215 have been wrestling well this year. The 189 was a huge match. Landers? I was expecting him to pin Casper. But his elbows are hurt pretty bad. He broke one earlier this year."

South Seneca's heavy-weight excellence left Salamone in a must-win situation.

"You're always scared that he'll make a mistake," Bantle said. "Once he got the take-

down, I was comfortable that he would control the match, but two or three times, Budd could have tied it up and won."

There were several close calls: Budd had Salamone rolled up late in the second period, but time expired before he scored near-fall points.

"One or two seconds more could have been the whole match," Bantle said. "Our guys didn't give up pins and kept it close. It was a great match. One takedown or reversal can make a difference."

The teams will cross paths again Saturday in the Finger Lakes Invitational at Red Creek.

"The dual meets decide the [league] championship. We like Marion, and we're friends," Barkee said. "We did what we had to do and they did what they had to, but you have to play against the referee."