



Bill Stiner/For The Daily News

**DICEY SITUATION:** Byron-Bergen's Mike McNally sits out during the finals of the 119-pound weight class at last week's SuperSectionals at Fairport. McNally is making his third trip to the state meet.

## Byron-Bergen's McNally hopes third time's a charm

### Six others also looking to win state crowns

By Chris Metcalf

For The Daily News

BERGEN — When Mike McNally was back in eighth grade, he was just happy being a part of a team.

He's still that way.

But now the Byron-Bergen senior has a lot more on his plate than five years ago.

McNally will be making his third trip to the New York State Public High School Athletic Association Wrestling Championships starting today and running through Saturday night at the Nassau Coliseum on Long Island.

McNally will be one of seven area wrestlers competing for state crowns.

Attica senior Jamie Carpenter (96 pounds), Warsaw freshman Ian Paddock (103), Pembroke junior Sam Domthongmivanh (125), Attica senior Dylan Rusiniak (130), Warsaw junior Paul Paddock (160) and Caledonia-Mumford junior Nate Schiedel (171) will also be seeking the top of the wrestling podium.

Last year, Ian and Paul Paddock each won state titles while Rusiniak was third.

McNally — who has compiled more than 150 career wins, second in school history behind Sam Herman — has finished second at the state tournament two straight years. He lost by technical fall to Bainbridge's Tyler Mumbulo (Section 4) in

2004 and dropped an 8-1 decision to former Holley standout Anwar Goeres of Phoenix (Section 3) in last year's tournament.

Both losses came in the state finals.

As a sophomore, McNally wrestled at 112 pounds, while last year he was at 119 pounds, the same weight class he has posted a perfect 39-0 record at this year.

"Last year was tough because I had beaten him (Goeres) three times before," McNally said. "I really thought I would beat him again. But I have moved forward. This is my final season, so it's now or never."

McNally's career got off to a fast start.

During his eighth-grade season, McNally wrestled on the Byron-Bergen junior varsity team for most of the season, including the JV county tournament, which he won.

Bees coach Mike Jeffords ended up entering McNally in the varsity sectional tournament in the 103-pound division.

Although McNally was unseeded, he ended up winning the title, beating the top three seeds on his way to the first of five sectional championships.

"I will never forget that first sectional title," McNally said. "It was the best of all five of them. It was awesome. Here I was just an eighth-grader and I beat a senior

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(Mynderse's Adam Montag) in the finals. All that I remember after I won was jumping into Coach Jeffords' arms. It was a special moment."

That same year McNally made it all the way to the SuperSectional finals, where he lost his title match to Canandaigua's Kyle Ingraham.

This year McNally won the SuperSectional title, beating Pembroke's Jeff Hathaway 10-1.

Unfortunately for McNally, his twin brother Steve lost his bid to make the state tournament when he lost a narrow 7-5 decision to Domthongmivanh in the finals.

"I was happy to win, but I was looking forward to my brother winning," Mike McNally said. "I really wanted him to make it. He didn't wrestle his best match. I have to put that behind me now and move forward. It would have been great to make the trip together, but he will be right there for me."

This could be the year for Byron-Bergen's first-ever individual state title.

"Two years ago, our girls volleyball team became the first team to win a state title, so if I can win it this year I could be the first individual one," McNally said. "That would be really special."

Is he ready for the task ahead?

"If I am wrestling like I know I can, then I like my chances a lot," he said. "I need

to stay focused and get right after it. I have continued to work hard this year and every year I have gotten a little bit better. It all comes down to this one year."

McNally's road to the finals will be a familiar one as he is expected to meet unbeaten Erik Johanson (31-0) of Schulerville (Section 2) in Saturday's semifinal round. Last year, McNally beat Johanson 16-8 in the semifinals.

McNally will face Jorge Muniz (16-10) of PSAL in his first-round bout today and should tangle with Rod Jansbedian (24-4) of Locus Valley in the quarterfinals tonight.

McNally has enjoyed the team camaraderie the past five years and would like nothing more than to bring a state title back to Byron-Bergen, especially for Jeffords.

"Coach Jeffords is an awesome coach. He has been right there for me since fifth grade," McNally said. "Coach will be happy no matter what I place, as long as I wrestle hard and give it all I have. That's all he ever asks of me."

As for wrestling in his final tournament, McNally thoroughly enjoyed the ride.

"I absolutely love wrestling," he said. "I love competing with all the guys on the team. When I am out there competing in the state tournament, every one of my teammates will be with me in spirit. Without my teammates, none of this would be possible."

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