

This has been a very special wrestling season, unique in so many respects, yet with some interesting parallels to wrestling seasons over my 24-year career as head coach. This team was ranked in the top 10 in New York during the season, and just happened to compete in a league with two other schools, who were also top 10 ranked teams. As a team we had some incredible successes winning 4 tournaments and some close-fought exciting matches with teams like Canandaigua who was ranked number 1 in the State. Many times during the season, I called upon JV wrestlers to fill in, in the varsity lineup in some really tough matches and they did so with incredible strength and composure. This team reminds me so much of the team of 1981 who won four tournaments, crowned 3 sectional champions and sent two representatives to States: Bob Button and Scott Eberhardt.

Wrestling is not only a team sport but an individual sport, too. When it came time for sectionals, our 3 senior captains approached me to discuss their opportunity to wrestle at a lower weight, because this might allow them individually to pursue their dreams of making the State tournament. Newark's team was successful in crowning all three of our senior captains, Jason, Jon and Eric, as champions and placed two others as third place finishers, Sean and Brian, and two others as fourth place finishers, Anthony and Jeremy. These place finishers went on to Brockport the following weekend to the State Qualifier Tournament. Newark Central School came home with the Award for Excellence for scoring the most points of all the Class B Schools in this tournament. Two of our wrestlers went on to the NYS Wrestling Tournament in Syracuse.

Before introducing my 3 senior captains to you, I would like to say a few words about each of them.

When I think of Jason DeFrain in terms of performance on the mat, I will of course always think back to Sectionals where he passed the 100th win mark as he won the Sectional crown over the defending champion that beat him the previous year. Jason didn't really start wrestling until 8th grade and he didn't crack the regular line-up until his Sophomore year, yet ended up with over 100 wins in his career. He did this by hard work, never passing up an opportunity to go to a wrestling club or off season tournament and summer camps. He is very astute and often I talked to him about things you usually can only discuss with an assistant coach. He was always willing to help and worked many of his free class periods with me, and on the highlight film, last year and this year, and on the yearbook article and pictures. He will join the Service and they are lucky to get him.

State Finalist, Jon Kelly, finished this season with a team high 44 wins and 7 tournament championships including the most outstanding wrestler recognition in 3 tournaments, including our Class B Sectional Tournament. However, my reflections back will always include him winning the Newark Tournament for the 4th consecutive time and receiving the most outstanding wrestler award. He is the only wrestler other than my son, Jack, to do this in 27 years, but more importantly it was the way he wrestled.....it was Jon Kelly at his best! He defeated a previously undefeated wrestler who went on later to win both sectionals and state qualifiers in Section III. Anyone who watched that match will always remember Jon as

focused, strong, in great shape, great technique, smart, confident and aggressive....a great example and so much like his brother, Tom, in the same tournament 4 years earlier. Jon had a varsity career of 157 wins. He was battling bronchitis after the State Qualifier tournament and this prevented him from performing his best at the State Tournament. As part of the wrestler's creed reads, "Help us to be humble in our wins and gracious in our defeats," Jon who hates to lose more than anyone I know, handled himself as a true sportsman and it was truly fitting that he was elected to receive the Section V Sportsmanship Award at the States. Jon plans to attend college after high school and wrestle intercollegiately. He is considering SUNY Binghamton or Cornell and he is a high honor roll student.

Jon and Eric Spratley have known each other since they were young kids. However, their association with wrestling did not begin until 7th grade in our Modified wrestling program. This is late for most high caliber wrestlers in most programs, today. I recognized their talent early and brought them up to the high school program as 8th graders where they became fast friends, great drill partners, and enthusiastic competitors. They were always there for each other, win or lose.

Eric defeated a 3-time sectional champion in the quarterfinals of the States for his opening match. His one loss was to the eventual State Champion in the semi-finals, before winning his final two matches placing 3rd, and a final career total of 162 wins, a Newark school record. My final thoughts will be of him winning his final match of his career in the States in Syracuse. So very few wrestlers end their career on a win, but more than that, his, was solid performance by an outstanding wrestler and a credit to the Newark wrestling program. I strongly believe that Eric's participation at the NYS Empire Games last July and his weight lifting program this year prepared him physically and mentally to meet this year's challenges.

More than wins, these young men are great leaders, hard workers, always willing to listen, learn and help others in anyway. Our program will miss them greatly in so many ways, however, I am proud to send them off into the world with the many fine lessons they have learned from wrestling.