

# Section V's MOW, Sylor faces tough challenge in Rochester

By **ALEX RASKIN**  
Daily Reporter

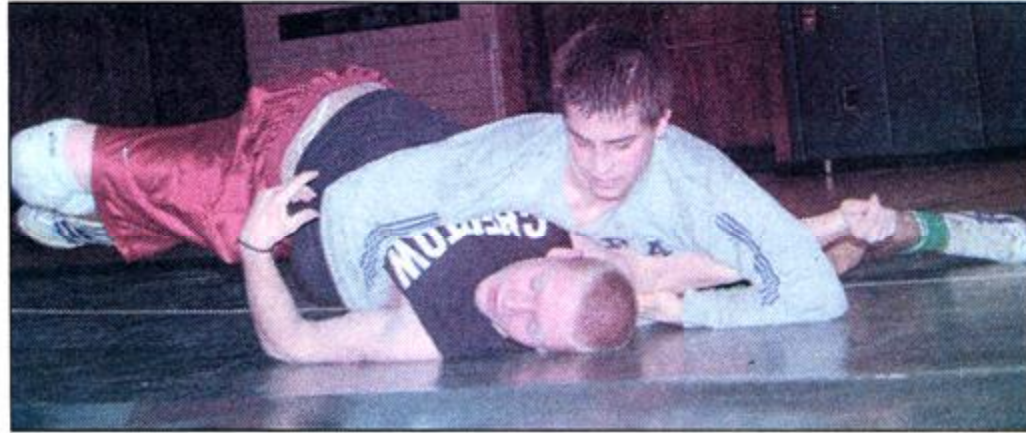
FILLMORE — Any year that starts with a new school record and ends with up with a sectional title (at the very least) has got to be a happy story. But for Fillmore's 140-pound wrestling sensation, Nick Sylor, the tale is still very much without an ending.

Sylor started the year by going up to 145-pounds at the Byron-Bergen Tournament and picking up his 117th career win — one more than previous Fillmore career-wins leader, Josh Stone ('96). After going up a class and still finishing third, Sylor's season took a downward turn when he returned to 140. Two finals losses — one being a 7-3 loss to Chautauqua Lake's Nick Miller at Portville and the other being a 13-8 loss to Smethport's Kevin Smith in Olean — seemed to have taken the Eagles' top wrestler off his game.

"It's been a roller-coaster," said Fillmore Coach Mike Witkowski. "He was disappointed to come in second at the Portville Tournament and then he was truly disappointed to come in second at the Big 30 Tournament in Olean."

When Witkowski started working with Sylor this season, the senior was

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ALEX RASKIN/Daily Reporter

Eagles' 125-pound sophomore Kyle Ackerman gives his best effort as he is pinned by 140-pound senior, Nick Sylor during Monday's practice in Fillmore. Both have advanced to Super Sectionals this weekend in Rochester.

## Fillmore's Ackerman, looks for more hardware in Super Sectionals at RIT

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FILLMORE — For a "learning year," Fillmore's 125-pound Kyle Ackerman is doing pretty well on the mats.

"I talked to him Saturday about how this is his learning curve year," said Fillmore Coach Mike Witkowski.

Kyle Ackerman was Section V's 119-pound champion as a freshman. Now a sophomore, Ackerman has bitten off a bigger piece as he accompanies Nick Sylor to Rochester this weekend.

"The competition gets tougher past 119," explained Witkowski. "I had to

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coming off of a sectional finals loss to Red Jacket's Zach Anderson at 130-pounds from the previous year. For Sylor to have a successful year, he had to be tops in Section V's Class B.

Fillmore's coach had to find a way to get more out of his wrestler. Sylor was nearly flawless physically and technically. What Witkowski noticed though was a vast improvement in Sylor's mental preparation.

"The biggest thing that Nick overcame this year is the mental preparation on a tough match," Witkowski added. "He really developed confidence. Once he got passed those matches he got stronger.

"He's always had the technique," Witkowski continued. "But he gave himself a mental edge. All of the sudden, a light came on and then he's getting that M.O.W. (Most Outstanding Wrestler award) at Hammondsport. I thought that did a lot for his confidence and then he came back at the Franklinville Tournament and won that. Then he won the prestigious Hornell Tournament. That is when it really set in for him."

With a 22-10 major decision win over Canisteo-Greenwood's Joe Rinaldi in Hornell, Sylor was tuned in. He now stands at

34-4 on the year, and is coming off being named the M.O.W. of Section V's Class B Tournament in Warsaw on Saturday.

"I had a good tournament," said Sylor. "But I wasn't expecting (the award). I had seen a lot of the guys before. I knew what they had."

One person he had seen before was Zach Anderson.

"I was getting psyched up to get the title that I had lost to him last year," admitted Sylor, who had also lost to Anderson in the 2005 Section V semis.

"Zach Anderson has been his nemesis for two years," said Witkowski after Sylor pinned Anderson in 5:09. "He's a very solid wrestler. It's been great seeing them wrestle and it was a good win for Nick."

Now he moves on to Super Sectionals. All of Class "B" will be on display this weekend at RIT as three wrestlers out-seed Sylor in the tournament. Josh Mayville (Marion), Justin Widrig (Holley) and five-time class champion, Mike Hackett (Pavilion), are all heavy favorites to move on to the state tournament ahead of Sylor.

With postseason points usually hard to come by, Sylor's mental preparation has taken the forefront in his attack of New York's best.

"One thing I love about

Coach Witkowski is this six minute attitude we have," explained Sylor. "That's where the first two periods aren't the most important. We want to do our best wrestling in the third. We want to step it up there."

When the tournament starts on Friday, Sylor, like all wrestlers, will be carefully watching those at his weight class to familiarize himself with their movements.

"I'll watch to see what they do with their feet and how well they wrestle on top," Sylor went on to say. "I look at the guy's hips to see where I can use my switch. Some guys are real intense but sloppy too."

While Witkowski is simply proud to have such an accomplished wrestler at Super Sectionals, Sylor applies pressure on himself to succeed.

"The pressure that is put on him is put there by himself," said Witkowski. "That in itself says something. He will put the pressure on himself to do well. He always has high standards. I watched him in soccer and of course, wrestling, and he really does have high standards and when he doesn't meet them, he gets very disappointed. He won't tear himself apart, but if there was a model for our program, he would be it."

## Ackerman

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change almost everything. Your always going to be against experienced guys. Below 119, you can make a bad mistake and recover, but above 119, you're not going to be able to do that. At 125 it's very difficult to recover and he found that out this year."

It's something Ackerman will remember as he heads to Super Sectionals at RIT this weekend after finishing third in Section V's Class B at Warsaw last Saturday.

"Sectionals was pretty good," said Ackerman who finished the year at 28-11. "It was hard. I was upset from being first last year, then being third this year. There is a lot better skill up here (at 125-pounds). There are more six minute matches rather than 30 second pins."

"He was disappointed (after this year's third place finish) after winning the class title

last year at sectionals," Witkowski agreed. "In the long haul, he has two more years and he's going to get even better. I think he's okay with it now, but he was awfully disappointed."

As you get bigger and older, wrestling strategy becomes an ally rather than something that needs to be overcome.

"We talked today about taking calculated risks in order to advance," said Witkowski.

"Kyle is dangerous at any point in a match. He has some unorthodox things in his style that he will attack people with at different times in a match. He may have to go to that a little bit as long as he keeps it close. He has a problem with falling behind."

Falling behind points-wise is something no wrestler, Ackerman especially, likes to have to deal with.

"I like to try to get the first points in the match and then see how it goes from there," explained Ackerman. "I'm trying to be more defensive. 70 percent defense and the rest offense. We'll see how it comes out."

Fortunately for Ackerman, a fourth year wrestler on Fillmore's varsity team despite being a sophomore, he's had some good wrestlers to look up to.

"Nick (Sylor) is a great wrestler," said Ackerman. "He's shown me most of his moves over the years. I was with him for four years in the club before varsity too."

Ackerman has a long road ahead if him if he wants to go to the State Finals. However, a sophomore will get two chances to come back to Super Sectionals if he doesn't succeed — which is why this is just a learning year.