

PATRICK J. MORALES TOURNAMENT

Ognibene Reaches Goal, Falconer Does, Too

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FALCONER — Alex Ognibene had a goal: to win his weight class at the Patrick J. Morales Memorial Wrestling Tournament before he graduated. The senior wrestler from Falconer got his final chance Saturday night and he came through, beating Eric Mazgaj of Southwestern, 3-2, to win the 152-pound class. Ognibene's match was perhaps the highlight of a highly successful, and very emotional, weekend for the Falconer wrestling program. The Golden Falcons had two other wrestlers win individual championships and the team won the overall title for the first time since the tournament was named in memory of the former Falconer wrestler eight years ago. "It wasn't until we had a team meeting a couple days ago that we realized that since this tournament has been named for Patrick Morales we haven't won it," Falconer coach P.J. Wendel said. "The kids wrestled with a lot of emotion." None more than Ognibene, who when he was a child had Morales as a babysitter. "It was an emotional night for Alex and the cards were right," Wendel said. "He wanted to win it for Pat. After he came up short last year he was upset. The goal was to win it for Pat before he graduated and he did. It was really good for him." Falconer scored 191.5 points to easily secure first place in the team standings. Frewsburg was second with 156 points, Ripley third with 147 and Jamestown fourth with 143. Falconer, Frewsburg and Ripley combined for 10 of the 15 individual championships. The showings by Frewsburg and Ripley were particularly impressive considering both programs brought only 12 wrestlers. "The kids wrestled great," said Frewsburg coach Tim Prince, who has five seventh- and eight-graders among his 12 wrestlers. "We've been practicing hard because we started out the season kind of sluggish. We've been working them pretty hard and they really responded this weekend." Six Frewsburg wrestlers made it to the finals and three of them — Kevin Strong at 96, Dalton Scalf at 125 and Craig Newman at 215 — won their classes. Ripley had five of its 12 wrestlers make it to the finals and four of them won: Abram Rowe at 119, Trent Johnston at 130, Logan Collins at 135 and Mike Gresh at 160. "This is a very tough tournament," Ripley coach Marty Rowe said. "It's kind of hard to compete against full teams, but we wrestled really well. That was a pretty good weekend of work. They're the hardest working group of kids I've ever had." Gresh was named the tournament's most outstanding wrestler after his convincing 10-0 major decision over Frewsburg's Jon Strong in the 160 finals. Gresh had a takedown in the first period, picked up three back points in the second and never looked back. "He's one of the hardest-working guys I've got," Rowe said. "He loves being in the gym and

he works his tail off when he's there. He deserves everything he gets." Ognibene received the Greg Munksgaard Award for his dedication to wrestling and long-time Falconer wrestling coach Steve Penhollow was recognized before the start of the finals for all his contributions to the program and to the sport. Ognibene took a 2-0 lead in his final match with a first-period takedown and worked hard to make that small lead last. Mazgaj escaped in the second period to pull within 2-1, but Ognibene got an escape of his own to go up 3-1 in the third period. As the last few seconds ticked off the clock, Ognibene was penalized for stalling to bring Mazgaj back to within a point, but seconds later Ognibene had achieved his goal. "After Alex got a quick takedown, he just got into the mode not to lose," Wendel said. "He still wrestled, but he knew what his goal was and he was taking steps to accomplish that goal." Falconer's other champions were Dave Raynor at 112 and Neal Nelson at 189. Raynor held a slim 4-3 lead over Frewsburg's Nick Mitchell heading into the third period, but an escape followed by a takedown pushed Raynor to a 7-3 victory. Nelson was tied 2-2 with Southwestern's Drew Merchant heading into the third period, but scored on a penalty, a reverse and three back points to roll to an 8-2 victory. "Neal has had a great year," Wendel said. "Merchant is overshadowed sometimes, but Southwestern kids are technical and they're tough and you have to be on your game. Neal got the win and it was very solid for him." Frewsburg's Newman trailed Falconer's Darren Oakes for much of the 215 title match but a reversal in the third period put Newman on top and three back points catapulted him to a 6-2 victory. Frewsburg's Strong also trailed in his match at 96, but a reversal at the first-period buzzer put him on top, 4-3, and he went on to defeat Westfield's Andrew Lindstrom, 6-3. Scalf took an easier route than his Frewsburg teammates, taking a 3-0 lead over Jamestown's Max Murray over the first two periods before holding on for a 3-1 win. "Dalton's solid all the time," Prince said. "He wasn't his usual self in the finals, but he's a very smart wrestler. I don't worry about him too much when he's out there. Even when he's having an off day he's pretty darn good." Like Gresh, Ripley's other three champions all posted pretty decisive decisions in the finals. At 119, Rowe defeated Panama's Jayson Fairbank, 6-0, taking control of the match right from the start. Johnston led the 130-pound match, 4-1, after one period and after a scoreless second period coasted to a 10-3 decision. And at 135, Logan Collins never let Hornell's Austin Dwyer get anything going as Collins posted an 11-0 major decision. "Logan, I think he beat one of the toughest kids in the tournament," Rowe said. "He's an excellent athlete, he's got all the skills to be a state champion, he just has to get it in his head that that's what he wants." Maple Grove's Josh Micek picked up the only pin of the finals when he took care of Westfield's Chandler Pool in 2:35 in the 140-pound match. Jamestown's Vince Liuzzo won at 145, breaking a third-period tie with a takedown and three back points to beat Ripley's Sajen Hunt, 7-4. Defending champion Eisenhower picked up three individual championships, with Jeff Parker defeating Falconer's Jesse Anderson, 10-0, at 103, David Osborne edging Southwestern's Andrew Jenkins, 3-2, at 171, and Mitch Straight downing Jamestown's Anthony Nary, 7-2, at 285.

TEAM STANDINGS

Team Standings

Falconer, 191.5; Frewsburg, 156.0; Ripley, 147.0; Jamestown, 143.0; Eisenhower, 127.5; Southwestern, 113.0; Hornell, 84.5; Westfield, 83.0; Maple Grove, 73.0; Panama, 73.0; Randolph, 64.0; Cassadaga Valley, 45.0; Chautauqua Lake 10.5.

Championship Round

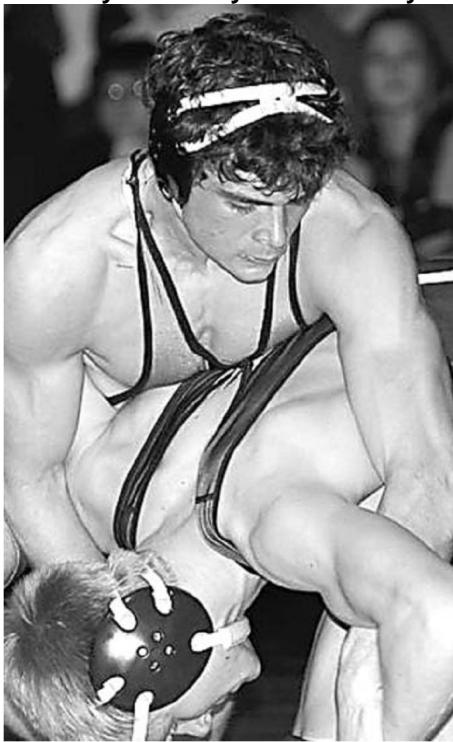
- 96:** Kevin Strong (Frew) d. Andrew Lindstromm (West), 6 -3.
- 103:** Jeff Parker (Eis) md. Jesse Anderson (Fal), 10 -0.
- 112:** Dave Raynor (Fal) d. Nick Mitchell (Frew), 7 -3.
- 119:** Abram Rowe (Rip) d. Jaymes Fairbank (Pan), 6 -0.
- 125:** Dalton Scalf (Frew) d. Max Murray (Jam), 3-1.
- 130:** Trent Johnston (Rip) d. Casey Billyard (Frew), 10 -3.
- 135:** Logan Collins (Rip) md. Austin Dwyer (Horn), 11 -0.
- 140:** Josh Micek (MG) p. Chandler Pool (West), 2:35.
- 145:** Vince Liuzzo (Jam) d. Sajen Hunt (Rip), 7 -4.
- 152:** Alex Ognibene (Fal) d. Eric Mazgaj (SW), 3 -2.
- 160:** Mike Gresh (Rip) md. Jon Strong (Frew), 10 -0.
- 171:** David Osborne (Eis) d. Andrew Jenkins (SW), 3 -2.
- 189:** Neal Nelson (Fal) d. Drew Merchant (SW), 8 -2.
- 215:** Craig Newman (Frew) d. Darren Oakes (Fal), 6 -2.
- 285:** Mitch Straight (Eis) d. Anthony Nary (Jam), 7 -2.

Consolation Round

- 96:** Hunter Waller (Pan) md. Kyle Green (Jam), 14 -2.
- 103:** Nick Yachetta (Fal) d. Austin Lynn (Frew), 6 -2.
- 112:** Jerrold Roosa (Ran) d. Emory Rowe (Rip), 2 -0.
- 119:** Mitch Wilston (Eis) p. P. Shaw-Brougham (Ran), 4:47.
- 125:** Joe Sirianni (Horn) d. Justin Hunt (Rip), 4 -1.
- 130:** Zach Nelson (SW) d. Adam Dwyer (Horn), 4 -2.
- 135:** Nick Bennett (Jam) d. Thom Betts (West), 6 -4.
- 140:** Jordan Riel (Eis) d. Kris Wright (Ran), 6 -3.
- 145:** Austin Spicer (Fal) d. John Mistretta (SW), 7 -0.
- 152:** Chris Mitchell (Frew) d. Jeff Edsall (Pan), 5 -2.
- 160:** Zach Penhollow (Fal) p. Andy Eklum (Jam), 2:52.
- 171:** Jamie Hare (MG) d. Mike Lundsten (Ran), 2 -1.
- 189:** Dave Parker (CV) d. Phil Cunningham (West), 3 -1.
- 215:** Alex Smith (MG) p. Pat Langworthy (SW), 1:51.
- 285:** Andrew Pingitore (CV) p. Cody Erickson (Fal), 2:35.



Falconer's Neal Nelson, top, is in control against Southwestern's Drew Merchant in the 189- pound championship match at the Patrick J. Morales Memorial Tournament on Saturday. Photo by Steve Garvey



Jamestown's Vince Liuzzo, top, captured the 145-pound championship over Ripley's Sajen Hunt in the Patrick J. Morales Memorial Tournament on Saturday. Photo by Steve Garvey

Penhollow, left, was presented with a lifetime service award



Former Falconer Central School wrestling coach Steve Penhollow, left, was presented with a lifetime service award by current Falconer coach P.J. Wendel. Penhollow began coaching in 1990 and recorded 207 victories and 10 league championships. His teams were undefeated five times, finished first in Western New York six times and were ranked No. 1 in Section 6 Class C 16 times. Sixteen of his wrestlers qualified for the state tournament and one, Jacob Schaus, won a state title and also a national title. The Golden Falcons were No. 1 in the state small school rankings in 1992 and 1993 and they finished second in 1997 and 1998.
Photo by Steve Garvey