

Wrestling ups and downs

Middletown 119-pounder Ruben Solero finds himself about to be lifted off the mat by Dave Larrache of Brentwood during Saturday night's title match...

...Solero wraps his arm around Larrache's neck as he's lifted off the mat by the eventual champion...

...but Solero, both feet back on the mat, almost turns the tables on his opponent as both head for a fall.

--TH-Record photos by John Szeftc

John Szeftc



State wrestling follows the cycle

Now that the rest of the state has caught up with and, in some cases, passed the perennially strong Long Island schools, the outcome of the annual New York State Intersectional Wrestling Tournament can be predicted fairly accurately. All you've got to do is follow the cycle.

Easy huh?

Not really.

The cycle turned up right on Section (Southern Tier) this year. Section 4, state champs with 80 points two years ago in Rochester, fell to fourth with 55 points last year and tumbled even further Saturday night when the 9th Intersectionals ended at the War Memorial in Syracuse. Section 4 fell way back to 9th place with only 22 points. The section's performance, or lack of it, was the talk of the tournament.

According to the cycle, Section 11 (Suffolk County) could have gone either way. Two years ago Suffolk was second with 88 points but tumbled to third with 57 last year. This year? Try a first place with 82 points and three champions, all from Brentwood High School.

How tough are Brentwood wrestlers? All you've got to do is ask Middletown 119-pounder Ruben Solero, who was beaten in the finals Saturday night by Dave Larrache of Brentwood. "He's the best wrestler I've ever faced," Solero said.

Section 9's 42 points were the second highest the section has ever compiled. Section 9 wrestlers garnered 60 points in 1968 for a fourth place and have slid to 41 and sixth in 1969 and 24 and eighth place last year.

Now comes the big question. Will the cycle take Section 9 up or down?

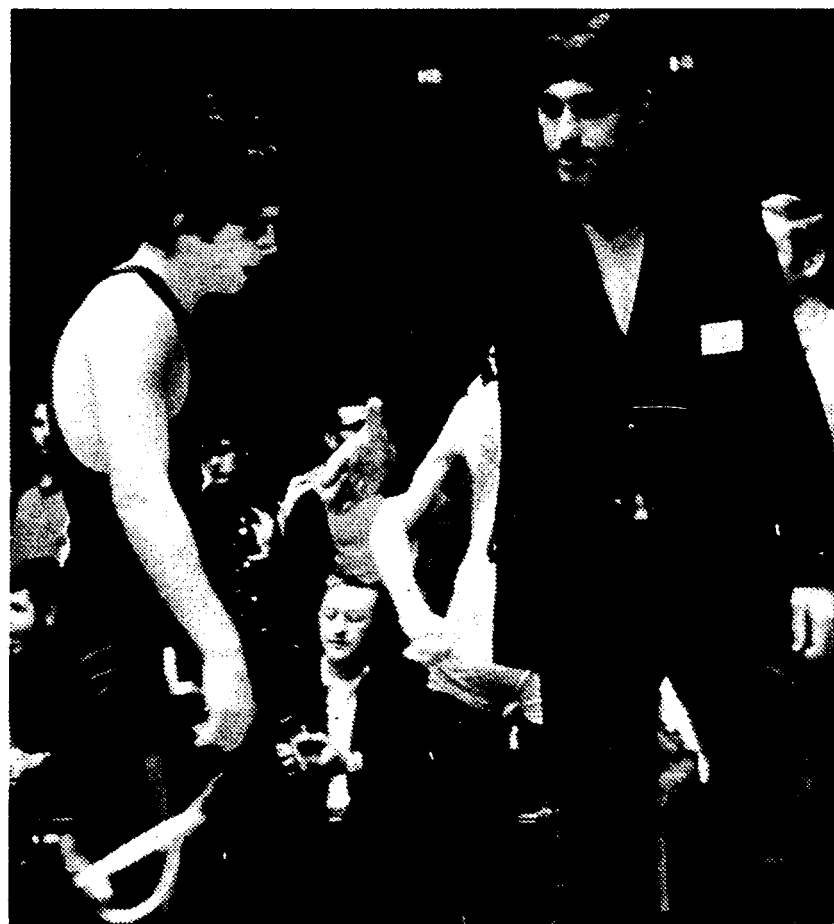
The section to watch next year? According to the cycle, it's Section 1 (Westchester) which garnered 61 points for a third-place finish this year - best ever. But which way will Section 1 go now? That's the big question.

FOR THE RECORD -- Spectators, who numbered 4,400 for the finals Saturday night, had a chilly experience. Reason? Mats for wrestling were placed on the wooden basketball floor which was resting on ice. Syracuse Blazers were playing Eastern Hockey League playoff game against Johnstown Sunday night and War Memorial was hosting city parochial league basketball playoffs Sunday afternoon. With little time between each event, War Memorial personnel were ready in advance. They couldn't turn up the heat in fear that they'd melt the ice. So everybody froze...

Former Syracuse University football great Jim Nance, now a fullback with the Boston Patriots of the American Football Conference, on hand to present top four wrestlers in each weight class with their awards. Nance was a pretty good wrestler in his day too, winning national heavyweight title as a sophomore and senior. He was beaten in finals as a junior...

Loss by Lou Conway of Pearl River in 138-pound preliminaries was shocker. A third place finisher last year, Conway was given best chance of winning a title of anyone in Section 9 this year. Ironically, Conway was beaten by Rory Houlihan of Niskayuna, Section 2 (Albany area). Houlihan previously wrestled on same Pearl River team with Conway as sophomore before moving to Albany area...

My choice for most valuable wrestler in press balloting was Section 4 145-pounder John Cuyler of Elmira Free Academy, last year's champ at 138. Cuyler looked every bit like a wrestler who's won 51 straight when he decisioned Pete Galea of Brentwood in the finals, 4-1. He won the award. Don Weber, Orange County Community College wrestling coach who was on hand to write a daily column for the Times Herald-Record, voted for Ramapo 105-pounder Joe Goldsmith, the only Section 9 champ. Goldsmith outwrestled four opponents to win his title by scores of 8-0, 11-2, 14-1, and 15-3. He looked polished.



TH- Record photo by John Szeftc

Disappointment

Port Jervis High wrestling coach Al Wilgard extends his hand to a disappointed Steve Saul after the latter was eliminated in Saturday's quarter-finals at the state Intersectionals.

5 Army wrestlers qualify for NCAA

PRINCETON, N.J. Army qualified five wrestlers Saturday night for the NCAA Championships March 25-27 at Auburn University.

In the NCAA District II Championships, 118-pounder Larry Baltezare made the best showing for the Cadets, reaching the finals before bowing to Navy's top seeded Tom Schuler, two-time Eastern champ, 9-1. The Cadets also picked up two third places, a fourth and a