

Spencerport's mat king



Junior Trevor Graham is 25-1 and is the shining star in a down year for the Rangers

By **TOM BATZOLD**
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It used to be called a dynasty. Spencerport's wrestling teams annually took home the team championship from both the Monroe County and Section 5 tournaments in the '70s and the Rangers even won the state title in 1975.

No longer, however, does that "S" on the the Spencerport uniforms strike fear in the hearts of the opposition. This year's team won 8, lost 5 and tied 2 in dual meets — a respectable mark for most teams but unheard of at Spencerport.

Still, one wrestler serves as both a reminder of the glory years and the hope for the future. His name is Trevor Graham, a junior, who is unbeaten against Section 5 competition this year and who some think has the potential to be Spencerport's next state champion.

"He's one of the most advanced wrestlers I've seen around here this year," says first-year Spencerport Coach Craig Cody, a former Churchville star who also wrestled in the NAAs for North Carolina. "He understands some things about wrestling that I didn't really grasp until I was a junior in college. And here he is, just a junior in high school."

Graham, wrestling mostly at 126 pounds, has won 25 of his 26 matches this season, winning the Spencerport Lions and Maryvale tournaments along the way. His only loss was an early-season decision to a Liverpool wrestler in the finals of the North Syracuse tournament.

And his record has improved annually. He was 24-7 as the first eighth grader on Spencerport's varsity... 21-4 while earning a trip to the state tournament as a freshman... and 17-3 last season, when he lost to Irondequoit's Tony Cotroneo in the 105-pound finals of the state qualifier.

"Not going to the states last year was a big disappointment," Graham says. "When it was all over, I was really depressed. That was one of my problems last year. I was mixed up. When I was a

freshman, I used to be loose and nothing would bother me. But last year, I worried too much about losing."

Graham says he's rolling with the punches now. He's working harder, but no longer feels the pressure to win at all costs.

"I'm just trying to stay happy," says Graham, who's also an honor roll student. "I'm in wrestling to have a good time and last year, it got to the point where it wasn't always fun. Now I just go out and try to wrestle my best. If I lose, I lose, but the other guy is going to have to beat me. I'm not going to give it to him."

Twenty-five opponents have already found that out this winter.

Although Graham has grown more than three inches to 5-8 and gained nearly 30 pounds, Cody says Trevor still "looks out of place" against most of his opponents.

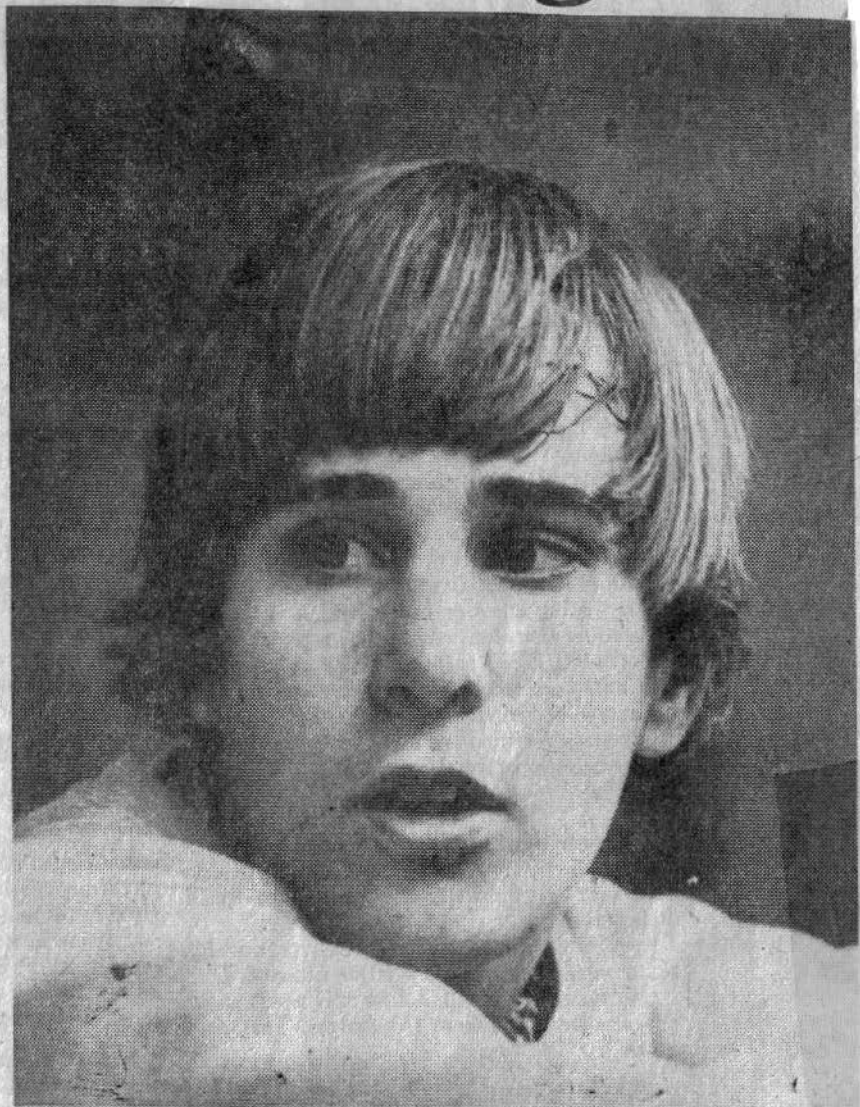
"He just doesn't look like he can match up physically with some of these guys — until you see him in action," Cody says. "One coach at the Maryvale Tournament said watching him was like watching a takedown clinic. He just has so many moves."

Graham has been involved in organized wrestling for about six years. Among his "coaches" have been his father, three older brothers who wrestled at Kendall High, former Spencerport Coach Walt Tieke and MCC Coach Mike Crommiller, who has worked with Graham in the summer.

"One of the reasons I think he'll be an excellent college prospect is because he's so coachable," Cody says. "You can show him a series of moves and he picks them right up. He's had a wide range of people teaching him, but he's adapted them all into his own style."

Graham is at his best on his feet, which showed when he won the state version of the U.S. Wrestling Federation tournament last summer. The reward was a four-week trip to the national tournament in Iowa.

"I learned a lot out there," he says. "I love freestyle wrestling as much as high



David Cook/Times-Union

Trevor Graham wrestles mostly at 126 pounds.

school because you're on your feet more. There's more action with all the takedowns. To get ready for the high school tournaments, though, I have to spend a lot of time doing matwork with my brothers so I can catch up."

Graham is the top-seeded 126-pounder in the Section 5 Class AAA tournament this weekend. If he wins there, he'll probably have to get past either East Rochester's Mike Kuhn or

Canandaigua's Steve Simmons in the state qualifier the following weekend for the right to go to Syracuse.

"If he wins, he won't make a big deal out of it," Cody says. "That's the way he is. His victories speak for themselves, but he's always very quiet, very humble. He's the kind of guy I would hope the younger kids out here will look up to."

If they do, Spencerport may be on the road back to the top.