



Clyde Rabideau of Saranac (Section 7) works on a hold as Newburgh's Jim Tiso tries to crawl away during their quarter-

final bout in the state intersectional tournament. Tiso won, 7-2.--TH-Record photo by Bill Burr

John Szefc



Canty takes light approach to wrestling

SYRACUSE
Tom Canty, coach at Ramapo High School in Rockland County, takes a "fun and games" approach toward wrestling.

"It's difficult because there's no easy way you can make losing weight fun," Canty said before the finals of the State Intersectional Wrestling Tournament here Saturday night at the Onondaga County War Memorial Auditorium. "You can make practice fun though. I do that. It's necessary to keep kids from losing interest. And if kids are interested and are enjoying themselves, they'll strive to excel on their own."

Canty's theory is hard to dispute. He's produced some dramatic results in his eight years in Rockland, first building Pearl River into a power between 1963 and 1967, then switching to Ramapo High, where his teams have been extremely strong, the last three years.

But his success was never more evident than Saturday, when Ramapo sent three wrestlers into the state finals and emerged with two winners, narrowly missing a third. Previous record for the most champions was three, shared by Brentwood of Section 11 (Suffolk County) and Mepham of Section 8 (Nassau County). And had it not been for a couple of bad breaks in a wild 155-pound final which Willie Manning lost, 10-9, to Rory Whipple of Irondequoit (Section 5), Ramapo would have had three champions.

Other than that, Section 9 schools didn't have much to boast about, although their final point total of 51 gave them their second best finish ever. In 1968, the Section 9 had 60 points and three champs — Lee Klepper of Suffern, Al Favata of Newburgh and Bill Sweet of Pearl River — plus a second, Mike Steckler of Clarkstown, and two fourths, Steve Keyes of Port Jervis and John Scanlon of Pearl River. Saturday, besides the titles won by Joe Goldsmith and Jim Horvath and the second by Manning, Jim Tiso of Newburgh took a fourth.

Six of the seven wrestlers from the Tri-County area — Orange, Sullivan and Ulster — were bounced during the first two rounds Friday night and none was able to rebound through the newly installed system of wrestle-backs.

The wrestle-backs, which are nothing new to college and some high school tournaments,

produced some exciting results. Although no wrestlers from Section 9 profited from a chance to try for a third place finish after getting beat, several others did. In fact, in the 13 weight classes, the consolation winner in six of them was a wrestler who had been beaten in either the preliminary or quarter-final round Friday night.

In only three weight classes — Tiso's 119-pound class, 126 and 250 — were the two consolation opponents losers in the semi-finals. In prior years the two losers in the semi-finals automatically advanced to the consolation round. The coaches like the new system and it probably will remain a fixture in future tournaments.

The only fact left undecided at the conclusion of the tournament was where the next one would be. Two years ago, Syracuse was named the permanent site for the two-day event, but the War Memorial booked the American Bowling Congress national tournament for next year and the state wrestling committee is looking for a new site.

Utica, which has a new War Memorial, reportedly has the inside track, but Section 9 wrestling chairman Nick Mottola of Suffern, a member of the state committee, said he would like to see West Point as the site for next year. The new Nassau Coliseum on Long Island is also said to be interested.

Wrestling popularity is increasing by leaps and bounds. An intersectional tournament has a lot to do with it. The state is missing out on basketball.

"Would it be so hard to get the sectional champs in basketball together for a three-day tournament somewhere?" one wrestling coach wanted to know Saturday night after a record crowd of 6,500 had showed up to see the finals. "First, you got to get them to crown one champ from a section," another said. "They haven't even gotten that far yet. They'd rather have three, four or more champs from a section because it gives everyone a chance to win."

The remarks made me remember something Tom Canty had said earlier in the evening about keeping kids interested because, if they are, they'll strive to excel on their own.

A kid out for wrestling ought to be happy he's got something to shoot for — a little pot of gold at the end of the rainbow in a state tournament. It gives him a good reason to want to excel.