

The look of a champion

■ Unbeaten Borrelli bids for his first trip to state finals during SuperSectionals.

BY STAFF WRITER
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His look is mild-mannered, as the muscles in Gary Borrelli's arms, legs and chest do not bulge beyond belief.

After a wrestling match, it's hard to tell if the Spencerport senior has won or lost judging by the way he walks off the mat.

Most of the time, a shrug of his shoulders is about as animated as Borrelli gets.

"I don't really show it, but inside I have a big smile," Borrelli said. "I'm proud of what I'm doing."

Borrelli has built a 35-0 record going into the SuperSectionals, Section V's qualifying event for the state tournament, which starts tonight at Fairport High School.

It has been almost a year since Borrelli has lost a high school match. A 5'11 looper to Hornell's Kory Holland in the 112-pound final of the SuperSectionals kept Borrelli from reaching the state tournament for the first time.

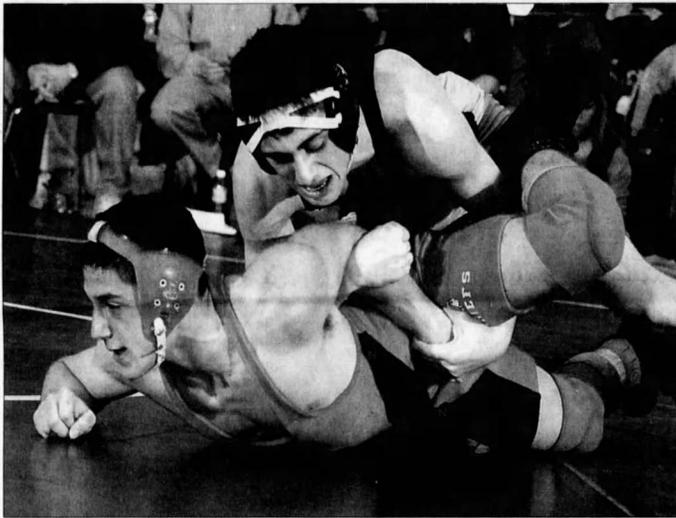
Since then, Borrelli has tied up, taken down and turned over opponents on his march back to this point.

"Right now he's at the top of his game," Spencerport coach Bill Jacoutot said. "If he represents his abilities, he should be fine all the way through."

"He doesn't let things bother him as much as he used to. If he gets behind, he'll come back. You have to have a hell of a match to beat him."

Steven Borrelli calls his younger brother "Champ," the same nickname their dad had during his wrestling days at Jefferson High School.

"I think it embarrasses (Gary) a little bit though," Steven Borrelli said. "He's very quiet and meticulous. It's very deceiving. With



ANDREA MELENDEZ staff photographer

Aggressor Gary Borrelli of Spencerport (top) goes on the offensive against Joe Lacagnina of Penfield at 112

pounds, he looks like the guy you'd pick on, but he's a gifted athlete and he's so disciplined in everything he does."

Gary, the youngest of four boys in his family, followed Steven into the sport when he was 6 years old. The brothers would run off to a different club team practice almost every day after school. Later, Borrelli would hang out at Steven's practices at McQuaid.

"As soon as I saw him go out there I thought I should try it," said Borrelli, who also played football and baseball. "Wrestling brought (our family) closer together."

"We'd just hang out, fool around in the basement trying to beat each other. My dad would come down and work out with us."

Borrelli made it onto the

Spencerport varsity as an eighth-grader. The next season, he won the 98-pound Section V Class A and Monroe County League tournaments.

He has pulled off this tough double accomplishment four consecutive seasons, doing so at 103 pounds as a sophomore and at 112 pounds the last two winters.

There are spectators who like to boo Spencerport wrestlers or cheer wildly when a Ranger loses, but wrestling fans at Webster High School gave Borrelli a nice ovation last week after he won the 112 sectional title.

"It helps that much more that people are out there supporting you," Borrelli said. "I have a hard time understanding why people boo us."

"We're just going out there to wrestle like we're taught, to

never give up."

Borrelli has caught the attention of Division II Binghamton University, Division I Buffalo and RIT; all three schools are actively recruiting him.

His coaches and teammates say Borrelli, using good positioning and balance, is very tough to score against. He compounds that problem for opponents by staying on the offensive.

"Even when I wrestle with him, I think maybe I can knock him over," Spencerport 103-pounder Shawn Hibbs said. "But he's a lot stronger than he looks."

"He knows he can control people and he gets what he wants."

Borrelli has avenged three of his four losses in 38 matches last season and has been

SuperSectionals

What The Section V wrestling qualifier for the state tournament. Sixteen athletes compete for one spot in each of 15 different weight classes at Fairport High School.

When Matches begin with preliminaries at 4 this afternoon. Quarterfinal action begins at 9 a.m. tomorrow. The finals are scheduled for 7:30 p.m.

"I realized I put a lot of pressure on myself in the past and I don't need to," the 1998 Empire State Games 15-pound freestyle gold medalist said. "I've tried to keep a laid-back style, mentally."

"If I win that's great. If I don't, that's OK, because I do my best."

He has easily defeated some of the area's top 112-pounders this winter, including Pittsford's Troy Forte and Penfield's Joe Lacagnina.

"I've never seen him at the level that he's at," said Spencerport teammate Bill Merle. Borrelli's drills partner.

Borrelli, who has a career record of 147-27, will have to stay at that level this weekend.

At the SuperSectionals, he will be vying for one spot on Section V's state wrestling meet team, with 15 other wrestlers, including Holland, Forte and Lacagnina.

The event has a charged atmosphere since everyone realizes that one loss for a wrestler leaves him short of his goal of making it to states. Seniors sometimes walk off the mat in tears after losing their last chance.

Borrelli's first opponent tonight will be Karl Baum of Wayne. The matches get started at 4 p.m.

"People from all over are watching," Borrelli said. "It's stressful. You don't know how good people are because you haven't seen them."

"I don't really think about it. If someone has to wrestle me, they have a tough match. I know that they think they're a man to beat too..."

Gary Borrelli profile

Sport Wrestling
School Spencerport



Borrelli

Class Senior
Height, weight 5-6, 112 pounds
Current record 35-0
Career record 147-27
Honors Section V

Class A champion (112 pounds, 1998-99; 103 pounds, 1997; 98 pounds, 1996); Monroe County champion (1996-99).

named the most outstanding wrestler at four tournaments, including the Class A sectionals.