

Forte keeps his cool

■ The Pittsford Mendon wrestler isn't getting worked up before the state meet.

BY STAFF WRITER
JAMES JOHNSON

Troy Forte has been in the Onondaga County War Memorial before, wrestling in this tournament.

The large crowds chanting their favorite section's numbers and stiff competition at the state tournament won't faze the Pittsford Mendon junior. Being nervous and awestruck only gets in the way if you're moving toward a state title.

Forte might even forget that one of his older brothers Jason, who attends Springfield College, will be in Syracuse to watch him wrestle.

"Once you strap on the gear and lace up the shoes, it's just go time," the 119-pounder who has wrestled in more than 400 tournaments said. "It's time to wrestle."

Forte is one of 15 wrestlers from Section V who hope to win their weight division's state title when matches begin at 3 o'clock today. The two-day tournament ends tomorrow night.

"It's exciting when you get there," Pittsford coach Ernie DiBella said. "But with him, he's able to handle it."

Forte and Spencerport senior Shawn Hibbs, the 103-pound state champion, are the only two-time state qualifiers in Section V's lineup. They have experienced wrestling their first opponent at the pinnacle tournament of the high

school season with butterflies in their stomachs.

"Yeah, I was nervous," Forte said. "Even though I'd been to nationals, it was just a different mood."

"I'm going to treat it like any old tournament and try to win it. If I do, I'm sure it'll hit me after it's all done."

Forte, who finished third two years ago, seems to have the credentials to win.

He is 44-1 after winning his second Section V and Monroe County League titles this winter. He has 180 wins against 20 losses after nearly four varsity seasons, putting him near, if not at the top, of Section V's all-time wins list.

"I don't like to get caught up in all of the records," Forte, a two-time freestyle and Greco-Roman All-American said. "It's nice to know I'm one of the best, but you have all the kids coming after you that much harder."

"You just have to be on top of your game all of the time. I think I take it more seriously than most people."

The quiet, lean, 96-pound junior has become a thick-limbed 119-pounder with the same high level of intensity.

"He's always been a finesse wrestler, strong with technique," DiBella said. "This year he's added muscle."

"There won't be many guys bigger than him. He's just the right size."

Forte's last two seasons have ended with losses to state

Troy Forte

School Pittsford Mendon
Sport Wrestling

Year Junior

Ht/Wgt 5-feet-5, 119 pounds

2000 record 44-1

Career record 180-20. Two-time Section V, Monroe County League champion. Two-time Greco-Roman and freestyle All-American.

champions. As a freshman, he was stopped in the state semifinals. He ran into the eventual 112 state champ at last year's SuperSectional final.

"I want to win really badly," Forte said. "Freshman year, I let the kid up and lost by a point. Then last year, I lost to (Spencerport's) Gary Borrelli and he won it."

"It's kind of like I've been right there."

Forte's routine will be the same as it is before each of his high school matches.

He will pace around and stretch wearing his Walkman headphones, ignoring the bouts going on around him. Pittsford assistant coach Fred Kemp will "crack" Forte's back to limber up the wrestler a little more.

Later, Forte will slap the hands of DiBella and Kemp before walking on to the mat, ready to go.

"He's always been intense," DiBella, who has known Forte for seven years, said. "He's the type of kid that goes about practice and wrestling one way — all out." □



File photo

High hopes Troy Forte has his sights set on a state championship in the 119-pound weight class. In each of the last two years, he has lost to the eventual champ.

Section V's line-up

96 pounds:	Peter Flint	(Warsaw)
103 pounds:	Shawn Hibbs	(Spencerport)
112 pounds:	Trevor Chinn	(Canandaigua)
119 pounds:	Troy Forte	(Pittsford)
125 pounds:	Aaron Hillyard	(Sodus)
130 pounds:	T. R. Chinn	(Canandaigua)
135 pounds:	Pat Hanscomb	(Hilton)
140 pounds:	Joe Scolaro	(Campbell-Savona)
145 pounds:	Josh Miller	(Attica)
152 pounds:	Geoff Selleck	(Rush-Henrietta)
160 pounds:	Dan Chase	(Rush-Henrietta)
171 pounds:	Zach Lehmann	(Brighton)
189 pounds:	Andy Kaye	(Canandaigua)
215 pounds:	John Smyth	(Greece Athena)
275 pounds:	David Leitten	(Warsaw)