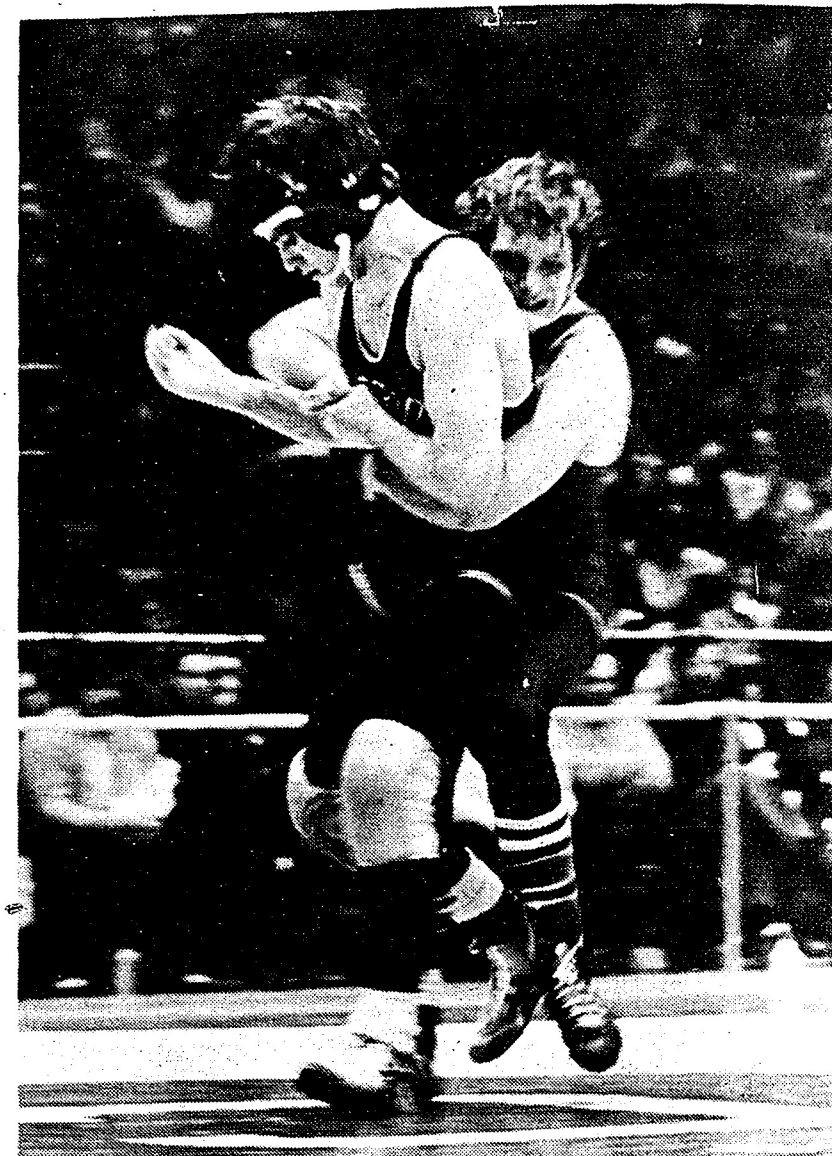
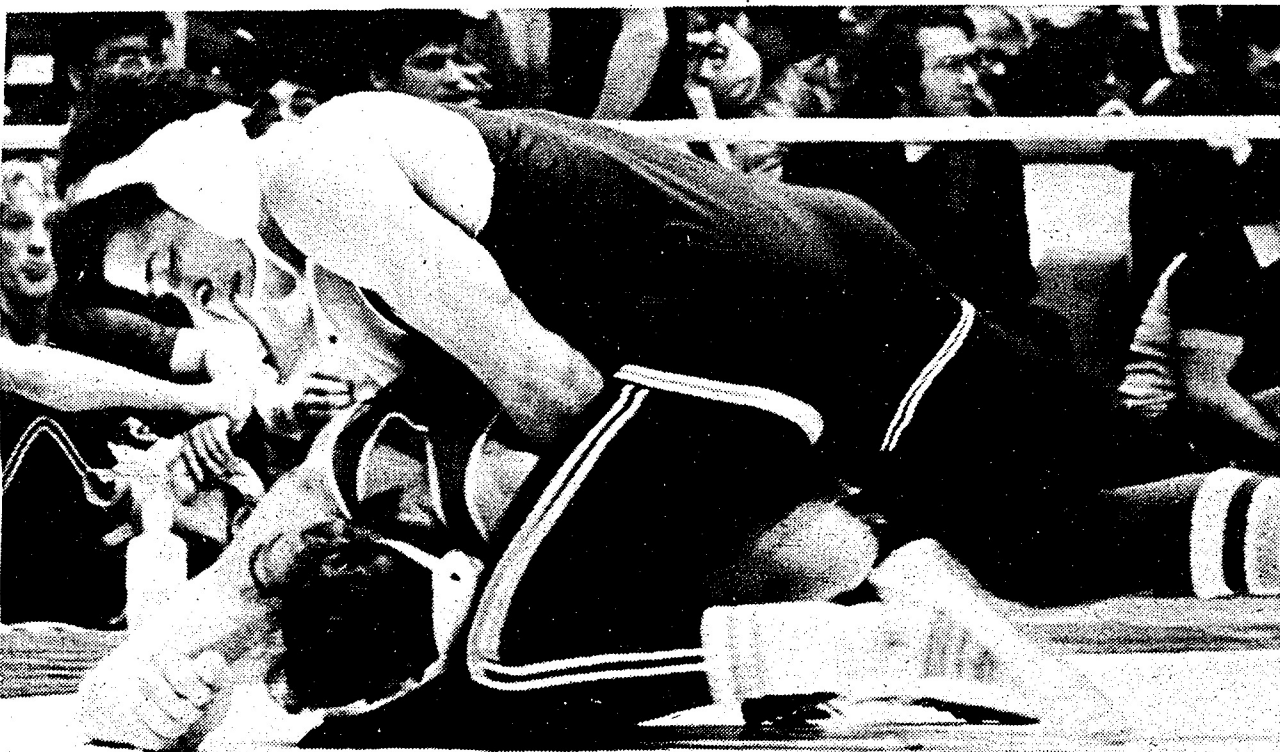
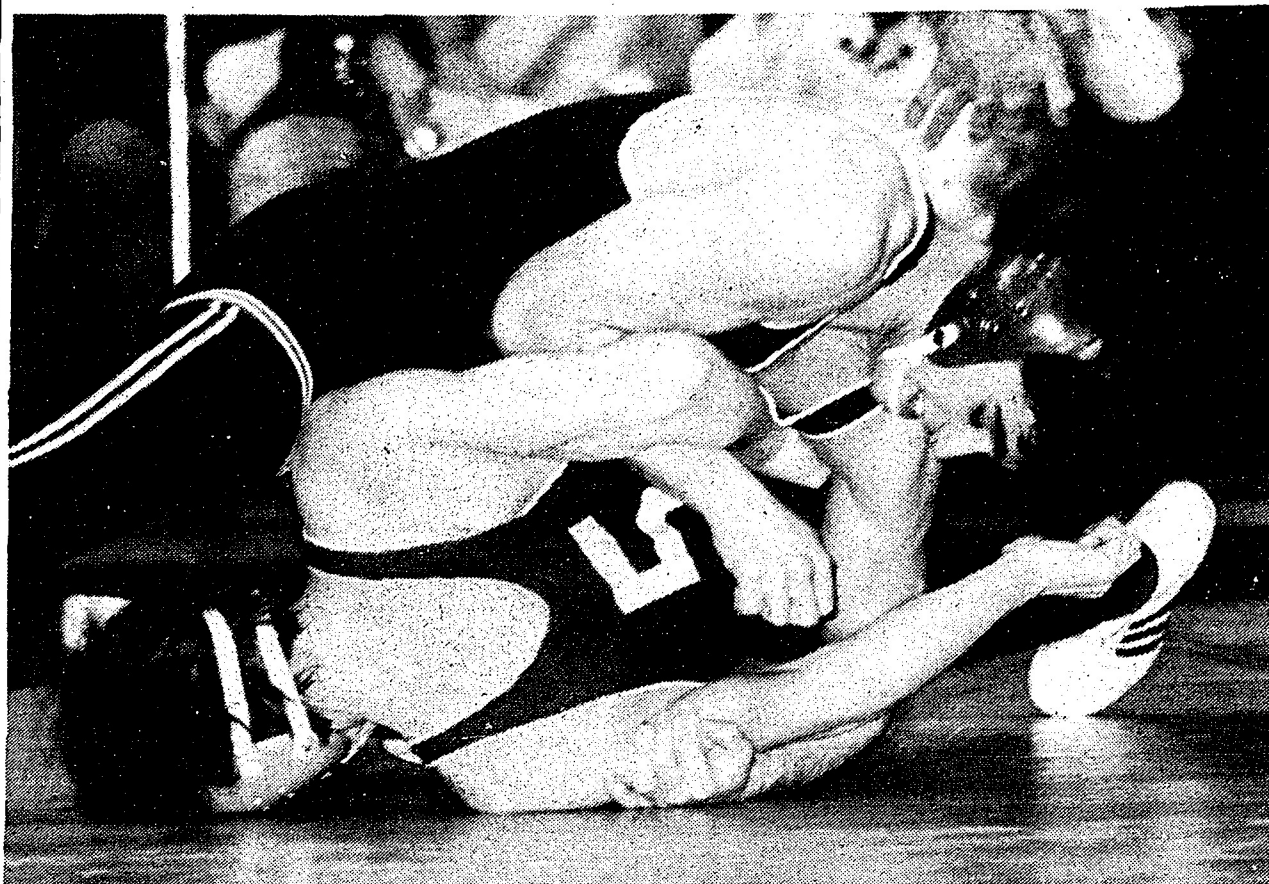


Widerman, Thomas, Giustizia state champs



Huntington Town produced three champions in the New York State public school wrestling championships last Friday and Saturday in Syracuse. In top left photo, Huntington's Paul Widerman (on top) tries to reverse Rob Starkweather of McQuaid in 105 semifinal. Widerman went on to win 7-1. Whitman's Mike Giustizia, bottom left photo, is in full control in the 126 semifinal against Mick Wilce of Union-Endicott, pinning him in 5:30. In top right photo, Huntington's Mike Thomas escapes hold applied by Jeff Iacovelli of Ithaca and goes on to 10-2 win in the 138 semifinal. All three were the only champions from Suffolk County, which finished second in the team standings. Mike Gargiulo photos

By CHARLIE EUCHNER
Sports Correspondent

Three Huntington Township wrestlers — Paul Widerman and Mike Thomas of Huntington, and Mike Giustizia of Walt Whitman — won state championships last Friday and Saturday in Syracuse. It was the second time Widerman won a state title.

The Suffolk County team (Section XI) took second place in the sectional standings with 174 points, some 24 fewer than the hosting Syracuse district (Section III). Whitman finished third in the school competition with 49 points and Huntington took fifth with 44½ points.

The state tournament, once again held at the Syracuse War Memorial, was tougher this year than it has been for several years, coaches there said. Ralph Schneider, Whitman's coach,

noted that three of the returning seven state champs were eliminated in the preliminary round. "You get some idea of how tough it was when you see those three kids just get knocked off," he said.

Probably the most exciting bout of the final round: The Widerman-Joe Labbate (East Syracuse-Minoa) matchup at 105 pounds. Widerman, though a state champ last year at 98 pounds, was considered by many to be an underdog to the local favorite.

Widerman fell behind, 6-3, after two periods and looked sluggish. But he went right to work in the final two minutes, quickly gaining two takedown points. The score: Labbate 6, Widerman 5.

With half a minute left in the bout, Widerman assumed the top position in a takedown position. He let Labbate free for one escape point (7-5 now) and quickly took him down for two points and a tie

bout. The match went into overtime and Widerman won on a reversal with 30 seconds left.

"Coach (Lou Giani) told me to do what I wanted," Widerman said later. "I tried to reverse him twice before and couldn't do it. So I let him get an escape point, so I could try and take him down."

Later on as the wrestlers were in the locker room getting ready to leave, Thomas kidded his teammate about the close bout. "You scared me for a while," he said to Widerman. "I thought, 'If he has trouble, what's gonna happen to me?'" Replied Widerman: "I wanted to give the people their money's worth."

Widerman had no trouble getting through the early rounds. Two decisions — by 9-3 and 7-1 scores — secured him a slot in the finals against the tough Labbate.

Thomas faced a strong sophomore from Port Jervis, Kevin

Troche, in the final round of the 138-pound weight class. He had little trouble in setting him down, however, and ended up winning by an 11-7 score that was not as close as the score indicates.

Thomas started in on Troche early. After one period, Thomas led by a 7-1 count. Troche kept fighting back as he did throughout the tournament, but the Huntington senior was too much for him. "He (Troche) may have been tough," said Whitman's Mark Palzer, who took fourth place at 112 pounds, "but Mike was a lot tougher."

The state championship was a remarkable achievement for Thomas, who sat out last season with injuries incurred in a Sept. 1976 fire. The fire burned 75 per cent of his body, and it was a wonder that Thomas even got out on the mats again.

Commenting on Widerman's match, Giani said: "We knew he (Labbate) had to wrestle because he already had been warned for stalling. I didn't mind it (the match) going into overtime since Paul is in such good shape and knew he would give it an all-out effort."

Giani said Thomas showed the true color of a champion in winning his title. "Mike has done a fantastic job, just remarkable, shows what a person with plenty of desire and determination can do after what he went through. I'm really proud and very happy for him."

Giustizia became only
(Continued on Page 37)

HAC tourney

The annual End-of-Season Basketball Tournament run by the Huntington Athletic Club, will take place this year from Mar. 28 thru Apr. 15. There are divisions of play ranging from nine year-old boys through unlimited class in both men's and women's divisions.

All games will be played at local schools in Huntington Township, weekday nights and day and night on weekends. Over 60 teams participated last year.

Divisions are: Peanuts — not 10 before Dec. 1, 1977; PeeWees — not 11 (same date for each division); Midget B — not 12; Midget A — not 12;

★ State champs *(Continued from Page 44)*

Whitman's second state champion when he defeated Locust Valley's Ed Pidgeon, 6-3, in the final round of the 126-pound competition. Pidgeon had beaten Giustizia earlier this year on a referee's decision in the Locust Valley Christmas Tournament.

Two takedowns and two escapes were good enough to give Giustizia, the county champ at 119 last year, the final bout and the title. In the first two rounds, Giustizia scored two falls (in 3:21 and 5:30).

Huntington Township's three champions were the most the area has ever had in state wrestling competition.

MAT NOTES : Port Jervis won the team title with six wrestlers in

the tournament, but was ranked second in the state by the New York State Sports Writers Association... lifetime record of finalists was 3,116-178-4... Tom Pickard most outstanding wrestler by coaches and writers.

Palzer took fourth at 112. He lost to Ken Wadsworth of Vestal (second place finisher) in the preliminary round, but won three wrestling matches... Whitman's Robert Jasaitis finished fifth in the heavyweight division, as he won two of four bouts... Mike Rogers of Half Hollow Hills lost his only two matches of tourney at 145 pounds... War Memorial had capacity crowd of 7,000 on hand to witness finals.