

Work works to his advantage★

N. Rose-Wolcott wrestler determined to be No. 1

By John Moriello

Democrat and Chronicle

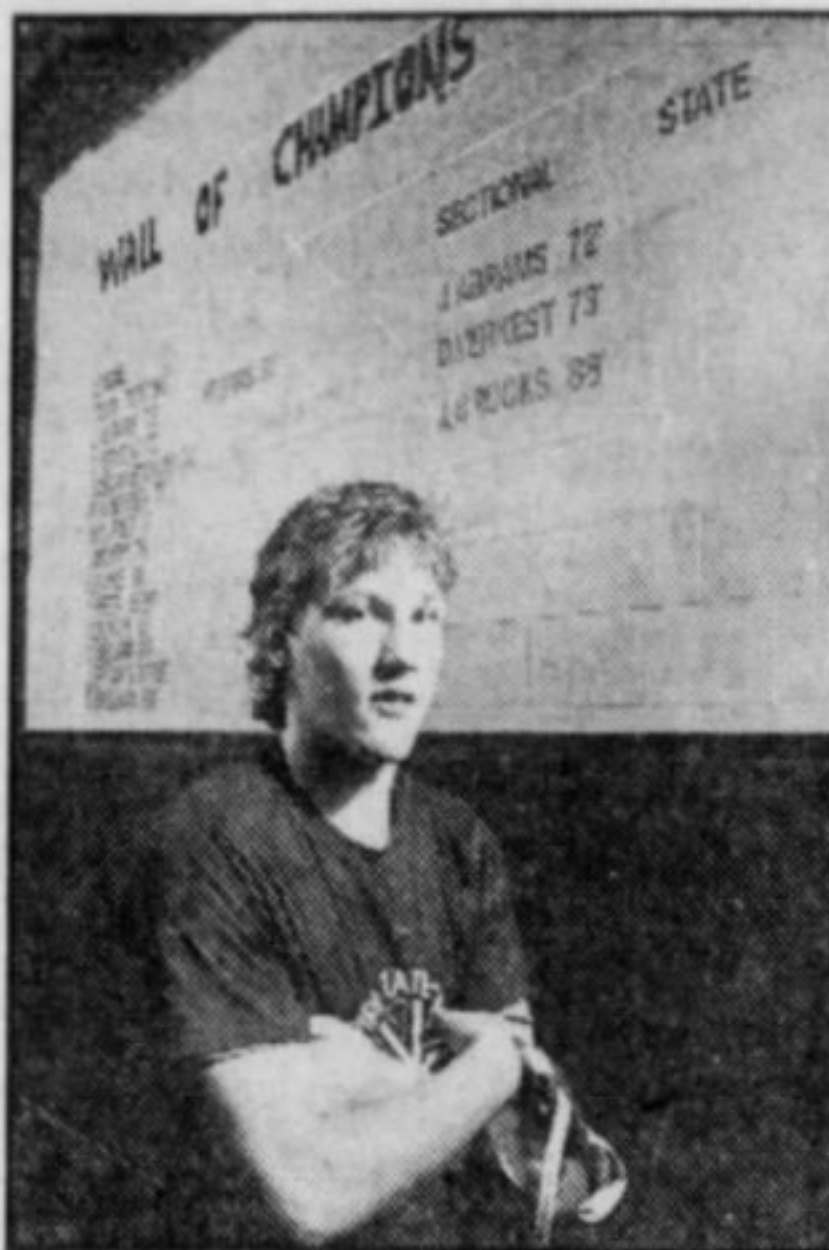
The fact that wrestling is one of the more physically demanding sports offered in high school is no excuse for not working hard every day, John Brooks believes.

"I feel that if I miss a practice I'm letting myself down," the North Rose-Wolcott senior said last week. "I'm losing an advantage and falling behind the competition."

Brooks, who has missed only one day of practice in the last three seasons, trails no Section 5 138-pound wrestler these days. He is 16-0 this season, with all but two of the triumphs coming by pin or technical fall.

Futhermore, he used last weekend to reaffirm his status as a legitimate threat in the state championships March 3-4 at the Onondaga War Memorial. Brooks joined teammates Rich Steves, Gary DeCarr and Wayne Holman on the victory stand by winning five matches in an elapsed 14:40 at the Genesee Valley Tournament. The performance earned him the pin trophy and the most outstanding wrestler award.

"He's probably the outstanding '38 this season in Section 5," Mid-



John Brooks is hoping his school's wrestling Wall of Fame will include his name as state champion in '89.

lakes Coach Lynn Tewksbury said. "I really expect him to win the qualifier and go to states."

That would be a major achievement. No wrestler from North Rose-Wolcott, in eastern Wayne County, has ever gone that far, and it's an accomplishment Brooks has narrow-

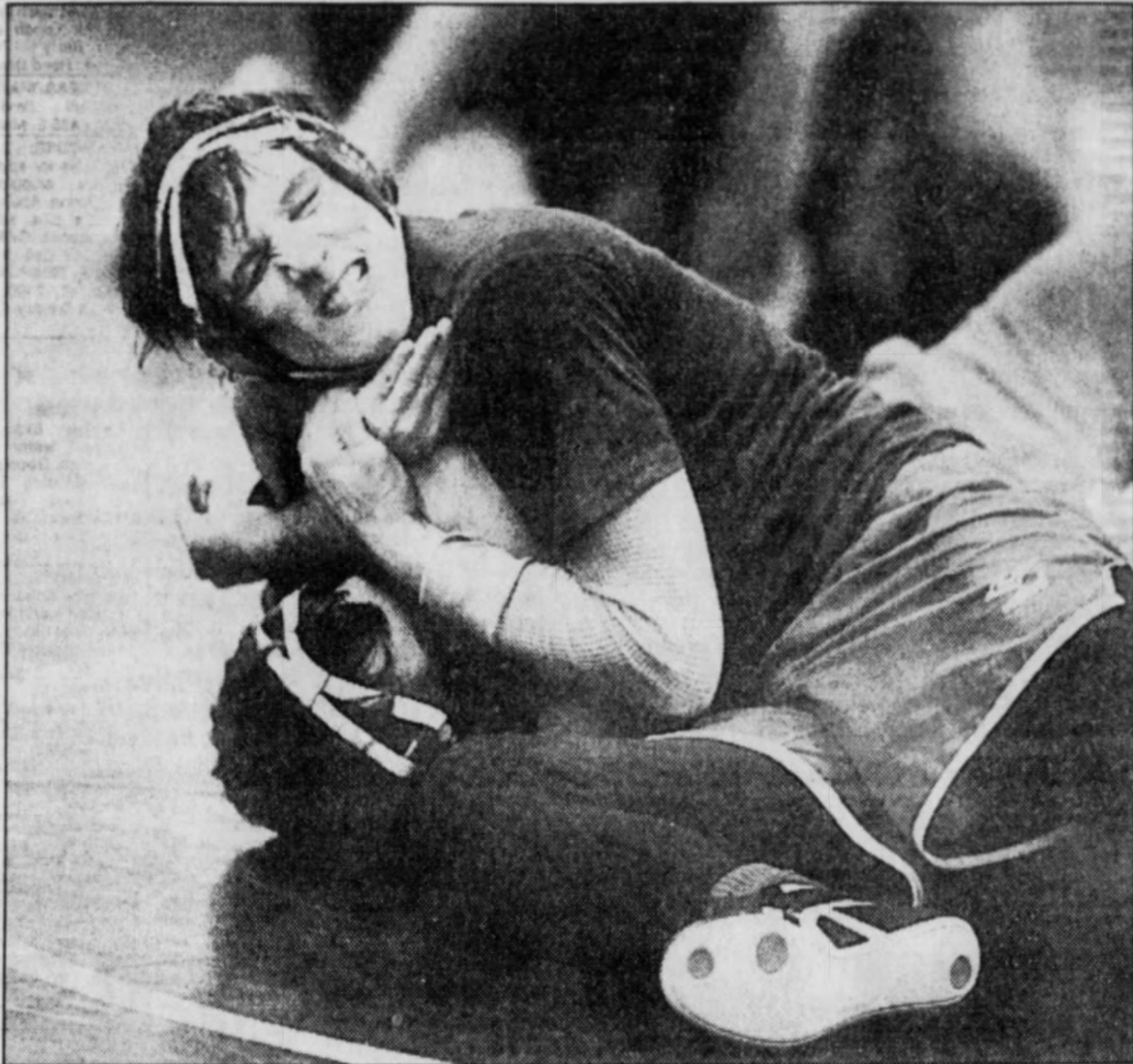
ly missed in his last two attempts.

"I was just a sophomore or a junior doing well against graduating seniors," Brooks pointed out. "I lost to Tom Reina in the (1987) semifinals and he went to states, and then last year I lost to Chris LoPresti and he went to states."

As Brooks noted, though, Gates-Chili's Reina and Spencerport's LoPresti were graduating seniors. Although hardly the only area middleweight competing this season, Brooks is in great position to make it through sectionals — he won the Class B 132-pound title last winter — and the state qualifier.

He knows, too, that he's ready for state competition. Brooks won the Rotary-Bernabi Tournament at Spencerport late last month with a 13-5 championship-round victory over Whitehall junior Chris Terry, who placed sixth in the state last year at 126 pounds and was one of only six underclassmen in the 126-138 range to make it to the Onondaga War Memorial.

He also performed impressively at the Empire States Games, breezing through five straight 152-pound free-



Julian H. Gonzalez Democrat and Chronicle

John Brooks, 160 at 138 pounds this year, has won 96 matches in his North Rose-Wolcott career.

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style matches before losing to J.J. Stanbro of Johnson City by a pin at 3:15. For the uninformed, Stanbro usually wrestles in the 155-pound range and is en route to becoming the winningest scholastic wrestler in state history.

Brooks' coach points out there's no shame in losing while trying to improve.

"He's exposed himself to competition like a kid from Rochester

would," Rich Romeo explained. "What I do with my program is try to go after the toughest competition in tournaments. It's kind of tough to do that in duals because it wouldn't be as beneficial to some kids as to others.

"That kid he beat at Spencerport last year was rated first in the state (by one publication). This was one of the top kids in the state and he took it to him."

Midlakes' Tewksbury agrees that "taking it to him" is one of the 5-foot-9 competitor's more effective strategies.

"He doesn't give you a chance

to do much on the bottom because you're always defending yourself," the coach said.

Brooks has been the type to try all sports, beginning with tee-ball in first grade when his family lived in Marion. He'll finish high school as a three-year varsity player in soccer (midfield), wrestling and baseball (shortstop/third base) and expects to go to college, possibly Cortland.

His wrestling career began in Wolcott as a third-grader.

"I heard an announcement over the loudspeaker that there was a wrestling club at the high school,"

Brooks recalled. "I thought that would be a big deal."

It took a bit of a struggle, like a 17-12 freshman season, but now Brooks is the big deal. He already is the winningest wrestler in school history and will be after career victory No. 97 at home Tuesday against Dundee.

A program that went a decade and a half between sectional champs is on the verge of having two in as many years.

"That was kind off a tough jinx to break," Romeo said. "I think we're going to have more now. He broke the ice."