

Pioneer rolls to third team title in Salamanca mat tourney

By DAN SERNOFFSKY

Exhibiting a line up of nonpareil excellence in an event noted for excellence, the Pioneer High School Panthers rolled to their third consecutive tournament championship Saturday in the fourth annual Salamanca Invitational Wrestling Tournament.

Pioneer claimed an incredible six individual championships in the tournament en route to scoring 197 team points, more than double the team total scored by second place Olean, 50.

The defending team champion coming into the tournament, Pioneer finished nearly 50 points ahead of runner up Falconer last year. In 1972, Pioneer tied with Portville for the tournament title.

While his team was dominating the tournament, Phil Roblee, Pioneer's premier 134 pounder, was dominating his weight class. Named the outstanding wrestler in the 1973 tournament, he repeated his performance in this year's tournament and was again voted by the coaches as the outstanding wrestler.

Coming into the tournament with a 14-0 record, Roblee was the top seeded competitor in his class. In the first round of action, he pinned Gowanda's Al Smith, then followed with a major decision over Bob Stone, Cattaraugus, in the second round. In the semi-finals, he decided Grand Island's Al Grimes, the fourth seeded wrestler in the weight class, 5-0, then pinned second seeded Kim Richir, Falconer, in the finals. Richir, also an outstanding wrestler, was 12-0 coming into

the tournament, but was unable to do much against Roblee, who scored a first period takedown and a second period reversal before coming up with the fall 12 seconds into the third period.

Following Olean in the team standings was Salamanca, with 46½ points. Falconer and Warsaw tied for fourth place with 43½ points, with Iroquois finishing sixth with 38.

Southwestern was seventh with 33 points, tourney newcomer Cattaraugus eighth with 32, Maple Grove ninth with 24½ and Portville tenth with 20½.

Rounding out the standings were Medina, with 17½; Gowanda with 16½; Eden, with 15; Jamestown, with 10½; Allegany, with 8; Grand Island, with 7; and Alden, with 5.

Pioneer's strength was phenomenal. Advancing ten of 12 wrestlers to the second round, Pioneer still had eight competitors left heading into the semifinals. Of that number, seven went to the finals. Don Hackett, Pioneer's 169 pounder, was the only non-winner of the Pioneer matmen reaching the finals as he lost a 9-1 decision to Ed Sunderland, who was number one seed in that weight class.

Besides Roblee, other Pioneer Champions included Mike Arnold, at 114 pounds, Bill Fuller, at 121 pounds, Dale Rogers, at 128 pounds, Keith Stearns, at 147 pounds, and Gary Devin, at 157 pounds.

Stearns, runner-up in the outstanding wrestler voting, was the only wrestler to pin his way through the tournament. Stearns picked up a first round fall over Salamanca's Bill Painter, followed that by

pinning Falconer's Jim Gatto in the second round, then pinned Buddy Hesse, of Eden, in the semifinals before scoring a second period fall over Duane Smith, Cattaraugus, in the finals.

For Salamanca, the third place finish was the best ever. The Warriors were the third place team in the first tournament out of a field of eight. In 1972 they finished fifth before dropping off to 15th last year.

"I think the big thing was the quality of the competition," said Salamanca coach George Whitcher, who was also director of the tournament. "All of our kids knew the quality of the competition coming into the tournament and everyone was up for it. It had to be the best we've wrestled this season, and we've wrestled some pretty good meets so far."

Salamanca advanced six wrestlers through the first round and sent four of those six to the semifinals. In the semis, Art Jacobson lost a tough 10-8 decision to Iroquois' Bruce Johnson at 128 pounds to drop to the consolation bracket, where he finished fourth.

Coming out of the semifinal round, however, were John Fitzgerald, Jack Hager and Mark Sartori, the first time since the initial tournament that the Warriors put as many as three wrestlers into the finals.

Fitzgerald, at 114 pounds, lost his first match of the season to Arnold. The second seed at 114, Fitzgerald picked up a pair of pins in his first two outings, then scored a 14-6 semifinal decision over Bruce Meyers of Olean. Against Arnold, he gave up the two point initial takedown, and despite scoring one for an escape, was unable to score anything else. On top in the second period, Fitzgerald was unable to do more than ride Arnold out, while Arnold was unsuccessful in doing anything more than riding Fitzgerald from his up position in the third period, leaving the final score at 2-1.

Hager, the number two seed at 179 pounds, also finished second, losing a tough 10-9 decision to Gowanda's Dick Gernott, the fourth seeded wrestler. Scoring on the initial takedown, Hager was reversed in the first period by Gernott to make it 2-2, but escaped to take a 3-2 lead into the second period. There, an exchange of reversals added a total of four points to each wrestler's score to make it 7-6 heading into the decisive third period.

Starting on top, Gernott picked up a controversial two point predicament to take the lead at 8-7. Hager came back with a reversal to pull back into the lead, but with less than a half minute to go, Gernott again reversed Hager, then rode him out for the remainder of the match.

At heavyweight, however, Sartori gave Salamanca its first tourney championship

since Gary Milanowski picked up the 107 pound title in 1971.

In the first round of the tournament, Sartori had an easy time with Cattaraugus' Jeff Roselle, but the top seeded wrestler survived a big scare in the second round before decisioning Brian Smith, of Iroquois, 11-6. Smith scored on the initial takedown and put Sartori on his back, dangerously close to a fall, in the first period to go ahead 5-0, but Sartori came back with a reverse, then picked up six more near fall points, an escape and a takedown to put the match on ice. In the semi-finals, Allegany's Ron Schoonover was forced to default in the first period because of a shoulder injury. Sartori was ahead 2-0 at the time of the default.

In the finals, Sartori picked up the only points he needed as he got the takedown on Southwestern's Bill Johnson. Johnson picked up an escape point in the second period, but Sartori matched it in the third for a 3-1 decision.

The tournament again played to a packed house, with over 1,000 spectators on hand for the finals. Commenting on the tourney, Whitcher said, "I thought things went off very smoothly again this year and that we had an extremely successful tournament. The Salamanca team and the cheerleaders pitched in to help out and the Booster Club was just tremendous. I really appreciate their efforts."

The trophies for the weight class winners and the team trophies were presented by Dr. Paul Kirsch, Superintendent of Schools. Dr. Kirsch also presented a desk set to Dick Post, coach of the winning Pioneer team. The trophy for outstanding wrestler was presented by Sports Digest magazine of Western New York. George Clark, associate publisher, made the presentation.

Championship Round

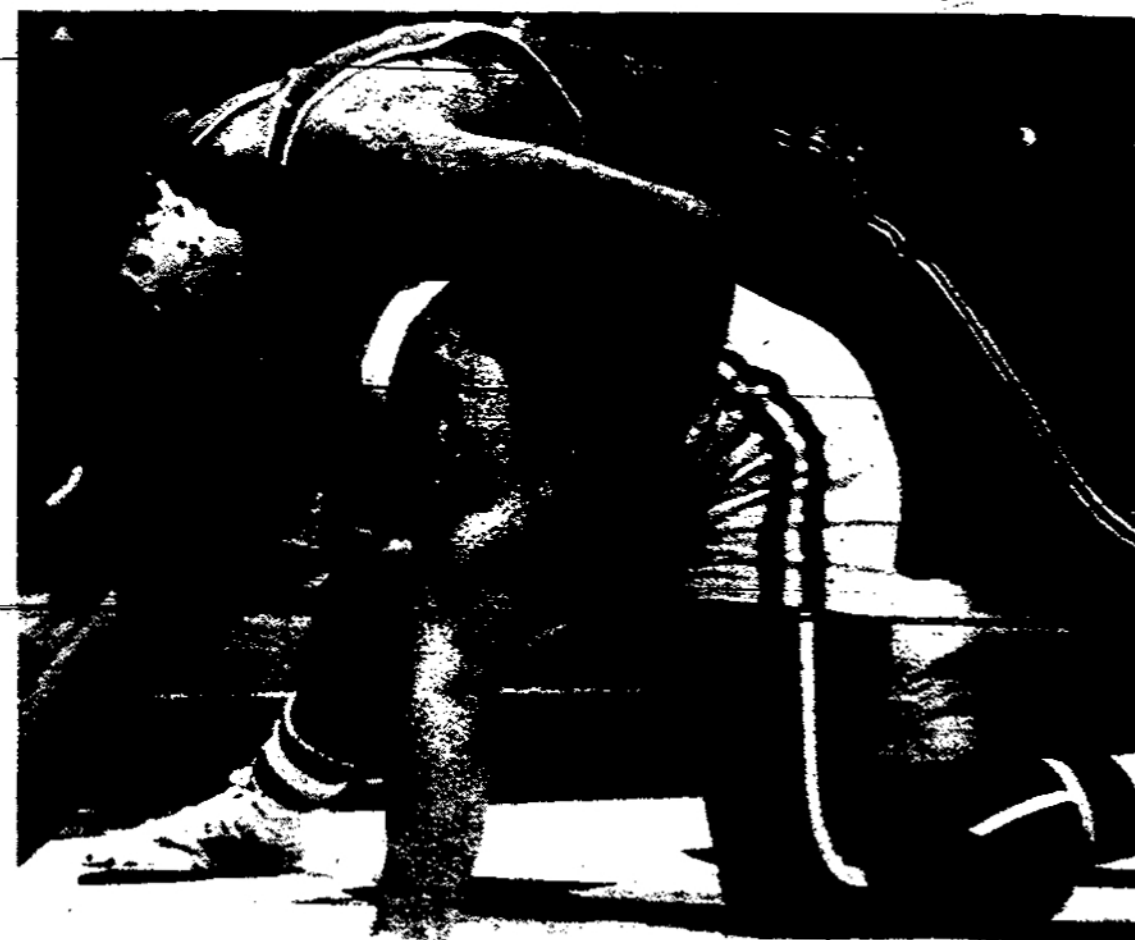
- 90: Jim Diehl, Olean, decisioned Bari Hallberg, Maple Grove, 8-2.
- 100: Mike Ognibene, Falconer, decisioned John Gillen, Warsaw, 15-12.
- 107: Dave Crean, Olean, decisioned Tom Birmingham, Eden, 10-5.
- 114: Mike Arnold, Pioneer, decisioned John Fitzgerald, Salamanca, 2-1.
- 121: Bill Fuller, Pioneer, decisioned Dan Shembada, Olean, 5-1.
- 128: Dale Rogers, Pioneer, decisioned Bruce Johnson, Iroquois, 7-1.
- 134: Phil Roblee, Pioneer, pinned Kim Richir, Falconer, 4:48.
- 140: Kirk Anderson, Olean, decisioned Mike Clark, Iroquois, 10-0.
- 147: Keith Stearns, Pioneer, pinned Duane Smith, Cattaraugus, 3-30.
- 157: Gary Devin, Pioneer, decisioned Dan Golanda, Southwestern, 6-4.
- 169: Ed Sunderland, Warsaw, decisioned Don Hackett, Pioneer, 9-1.
- 179: Dick Gernott, Gowanda, decisioned Jack Hager, Salamanca, 10-9.
- Hwt.: Mark Sartori, Salamanca, decisioned Bill Johnson, Southwestern, 3-1.
- Unl.: Jay Hackemer, Warsaw, pinned Mark Taber, Iroquois, 1:21.

Consolation Round

- 90: Gerry Christopher, Portville, decisioned Tom Crawford, Grand Island, 11-1.
- 100: Keith Miller, Cattaraugus, decisioned Keith Floyd, Pioneer, 27-19.
- 107: Kim Foucha, Iroquois, won by forfeit over Audie Plumley, Medina, who was unable to wrestle because of stitches in his lip.
- 114: Bruce Meyers, Olean, decisioned Kurt Falkner, Falconer, 5-2.
- 121: Tim Murphy, Maple Grove, decisioned Rick Rothfuss, Iroquois, 7-4.
- 128: Joe Swanson, Portville, pinned Art Jacobson, Salamanca, 5-04.
- 140: Al Grimes, Grand Island, pinned Gary Wefing, Maple Grove, 5:59.
- 140: Warren Bush, Warsaw, won by default over Mark Boling, Alden, after an ankle injury to Boling prevented further competition.
- 147: Jim Faulkner, Portville, pinned Buddy Hesse, Eden, 4:16.
- 157: Brian Miller, Cattaraugus, won by forfeit over Glen Gese, Maple Grove, who was unable to wrestle due to illness.
- 169: Dave Denn, Southwestern, decisioned Jeff Gross, Portville, 7-2.
- 179: Bob Darling, Jamestown, decisioned Bill Nice, Medina, 6-4.
- Hwt.: John Gurlin, Allegany, won by forfeit over Ron Schoonover, Allegany, who was unable to wrestle due to a shoulder injury.
- Unl.: Mike Mentley, Gowanda, decisioned Bill Mingle, Pioneer, 5-1.

Final team standings

- Pioneer, 107; Olean, 50; Salamanca, 46½; Falconer, 43½; Warsaw, 43½; Iroquois, 38; Southwestern, 33; Cattaraugus, 32; Maple Grove, 24½; Portville, 20½; Medina, 17½; Gowanda, 16½; Eden, 15; Jamestown, 10½; Allegany, 8; Grand Island, 7; Alden, 5.



COMING UP — Salamanca's Mark Sartori (light jersey) begins to come to his feet in the third period of his championship match with Southwestern's Bill Johnson. Sartori escaped on the move to pick up one point en route to a 3-1 decision and the heavyweight title. (Press Staff Photo)



STRETCHED OUT — John Fitzgerald stretches as a prelude to a first period reversal against Olean's Bruce Meyers in the semifinal round of the Salamanca Invitational Wrestling Tournament. Fitzgerald (facing up) beat Meyers 14-6 to advance to the finals, where he suffered a 2-1 setback at the hands of Pioneer's Mike Arnold, tourney champ at 114. (Press Staff Photo)



GOING OVER — Jack Hager (light jersey), Salamanca's 179 pounder, struggles to roll Southwestern's Dave Golanda over in the second period of their second round match up. Hager won an 11-10 decision to advance to the semifinals before going on to the championship round, where he finished second by dropping a tough 10-9 decision to Dick Gernett. (Press Staff Photo)



TOURNAMENT WINNERS — The individual weight class winners at the Salamanca Invitational Wrestling Tournament were led by Pioneer as the Panthers picked up six titles. Voted the outstanding wrestler of the tournament was Phil Roblee, Pioneer's 134 pounder, who also won the award last year. The winners were: front row (l-r): Roblee; Bill Fuller, Pioneer, 121 pounds; Mike Arnold, Pioneer, 114 pounds; Dave Crean, Olean, 107 pounds; Mike

Ognibene, Falconer, 100 pounds; Jim Diehl, Olean, 90 pounds; Back row: Dale Rogers, Pioneer, 128 pounds; Kirk Anderson, Olean, 140 pounds; Keith Stearns, Pioneer, 147 pounds; Gary Devin, Pioneer, 157 pounds; Ed Sunderland, Warsaw, 169 pounds; Dick Gernett, Gowanda, 179 pounds; Mark Sartori, Salamanca, heavyweight; Jay Hackemer, Warsaw, unlimited. (Press Staff Photo)