



Jamie Germano Democrat and Chronicle

# Alfred-Almond's Porter hopes to pin down his second state wrestling championship

By Walt Slater

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Nobody wants anything to do with Alfred-Almond wrestler Kenny Porter.

"Everybody wants to duck him," said Alfred-Almond Coach John Ninos. "He's had to go way up all season just to get some competition."

Porter is the defending state 138-pound champion. He won a gold freestyle medal at 154 pounds at last summer's Empire State Games and took a 142-13 career high school record into this weekend's Sectional Class D tournament.

Porter won all 29 of his regular-season matches and pinned 20 opponents this winter to extend his high school winning streak to 60 bouts. The only dual-meet defeat he ever suffered in five varsity seasons came when he was an eighth-grader.

Great accomplishments earn great respect. Porter has been wrestling as high as 167 pounds this season simply to find opponents. But only one wrestler, Pembroke's Chad Smith, has taken him down all season.

Smith caught Porter unprepared in the opening round of January's Alfred-Almond Classic. He countered a late move to earn the takedown and led Porter, 2-0, at the end of the first period. Porter came back to win, 4-2.

Smith won the Genesee Region 155-pound championship last weekend, but in January he was still building a reputation.

"He (Smith) was a total unknown at the time," Ninos said. "He wasn't even seeded. Kenny went in without really warming up and he learned something — you have to be prepared for every match because you never know who might be out there."

Porter was 39-1 last year. His only loss, was a 5-4 defeat by Marion's Todd Miller in the opening round of the 1989 Penfield Tournament. Miller scored all of his points on one, early move.

Porter hasn't had a chance to avenge that defeat. Miller was at 138 at Penfield this year. Porter weighed in at 145. When Fair-

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port junior Matt Logan also came in at 138, two major early-season tests never materialized.

"The Penfield tournament was the only tournament where we could even wrestle him at 145," Ninos said. "He was at '55 in the others just to get good matches. And Penfield kind of irked me."

Porter and Logan are expected to meet in the 138 final of next weekend's SuperSectional state tournament qualifying meet at Webster Schroeder Junior High. Logan took an undefeated record into last weekend's Class A sectionals, although he was tied by Brighton's Yancee Fritz during a dual meet, and is the Monroe County's 138 champion.

Few people thought Porter would be able to cut enough weight to drop to 138. *New York Wrestling News* ranks him No. 1 in the state at 145. The wrestler he defeated 12-5 in last March's state 138 final and 6-2 in last summer's ESG 154 freestyle gold-medal match, John Spiegleman of Suffern (Section 1), is ranked No. 1 at 138.

Kareeb Howard of Fowler (Section 3) is ranked No. 2. Porter and Howard split four freestyle matches last summer.

Porter would like to face either of them at the state championships in Syracuse.

"I'd like to get back at Kareeb," Porter admits. "It's one of those grudge things. He's a real nice technician."

"But I'd like to wrestle Spiegleman

again, too, because *New York Wrestling News* said (Spiegleman) has proved he can beat anybody in the state in his weight class. That's something that makes you want to go out and thump him."

One year ago, no one thought Porter would even make it to the state tournament. Spencerport's Tom Foos, now wrestling at Maryland, had dropped to 138. Foos won the Class A sectional crown and was the SuperSectionals favorite before he lost to Porter in the finals.

Nothing less than another state championship will satisfy Porter now.

"You always look at yourself as just another one of the guys," he said. "A couple of years ago I would have been happy to lose to a real top gun by a point or two. But after you go head-to-head with these guys and you beat them, you move into another mental state."

"I really want to make a name for myself nationally now, I want to place in the high school nationals and do something at the junior (freestyle) nationals."

He has narrowed his college choices to Division I Penn State and Clarion, Pa.

"He has some big ambitions," Ninos said. "But he's worked hard. He's done a lot of weightlifting and he's a different-looking wrestler this year."

"He's much bigger and stronger in the upper body and his takedowns have improved incredibly since last year. He was really good on top in the past but he had a bad tendency to want to tie up with kids. Now he's learned the benefit of being smooth."

Porter agreed.

"Takedowns are probably my bread and butter now," he said. "It's really weird. It's like you're a heat sensor. As soon as I see somebody make one bad move, it's like a sense. You move fast and try to get him to the mat, without really thinking about it all. It's speed and agility, and it's experience... Now I know that if somebody is going to beat me, he's going to have to be really good."

Alfred-Almond's Ken Porter, the state champ at 138 pounds, wrestled above that class during the season, has cut back to that weight for post-season tournaments.