

★ Eric Watts Captures State Wrestling Crown

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ERIC WATTS

Young Eric Watts, 17 year old senior from Suffern High School, made Rockland County sports history, Saturday, as he wrestled his way through the grueling three bout New York State Intersectional Wrestling Tournament at Ithaca College and brought home Rockland's first grappling title

Watts, son of Gardner Watts, a teacher at Suffern High, hails from 15 Beech Road, Suffern Park, and capped his fourth year of wrestling at the Ramapo school with his 28th consecutive victory in the finals Saturday evening. The 115 pound county and sectional champ decisioned Bill Germann of Montauk, Long Island, 2-1, on riding time after having disposed of two opponents in the preliminaries.

Eric, talking on the telephone last night, attributed his success to his high school coach, Guy Guccione. "Mr. Guccione kept working with me on improving my skills and speed", said the youngster, "and wouldn't let me rest on my laurels." Calling himself a "leg wrestler", Watts continued, "we worked alot on navy rides and strategy and it just paid off."

WATTS HAD A fairly easy time of it in the prelims, decisioning Don Burns of Lindenhurst, 14-1 and Jerry Holmor of Southampton, 17-0. In the finals, after wrestling to a 0-0 standoff in the first period, Watts escaped from Germann to take a 1-0 lead. In the third period he rode Germann for 1:45 to get his riding time point

before the Long Island grappler escaped to make it 2-1.

The new 115 state champ was approached by several college scouts at Ithaca and has narrowed his choice to Rutgers, Syracuse, and Pittsburgh.

Watts was the only representative of Section Nine to make the finals. Teammate Burt Royce, a 106 pound dark-horse, got fourth place in his weight bracket, while all other 10 Rockland and Orange County wrestlers lost in the first round.

FRESHMAN BOBBY Johnston of Suffern lost a 8-0 decision to Claude Poole of Ithaca. Poole, representing Section Four, went on to cop the 98 pound champion.

Royce decisioned Tom Lansdown of Groton, 2-0 in overtime but lost to Ken Melchoir of Lindenhurst, L.I. in his second bout. He then lost to Bob Stokes of Niagra Wheat Fields, 4-1, in the consolation bout.

Haverstraw's Craig Ketchum dropped a 7-3 duke to John Walters of Long Island's Section Eight in the 123 pound class.

Howie MacMillan of Suffern, considered as a title threat, lost to Sidney's Marc Payne by a 6-2 score. Payne went on to take second place in the 136 pound class.

JOHN ENG, also of the Mounties, took a close, 7-5, defeat at the hands of Rich Maher of Amityville, L. I. at 141 pounds.

Pearl River's Paul Salierno, freshman champ at 147, lost to Lyle Johnson of Garden City in a close, 5-3, defeat.

Marc Baretz, Spring Valley's 180 pound county and sectional champ lost to Ken Poulos, 2-0.

Ed Giraudauskas of Haverstraw went under to Doug Smith of Dreyden by a 8-1 count. Smith went on to become the Unlimited champion.