

Suhr outwrestles Habecker for first shot at N.Y. title

Teammate LoPresti, 12 others earn trip to states in Syracuse

By Gary Fallesen



Democrat and Chronicle

Rick Suhr only briefly entertained the notion of moving up one weight class to avoid Marion's Tim Habecker. Then, the Spencerport High senior decided, "I'm not running from nobody."

So Suhr stayed at 155 pounds and prepared himself for the wrestling match of the season, if not his career.

"From the first practice of the year I knew I was going to meet him in the finals," Suhr said last night at the Super Sectionals. "This is a big match for me. That might have been the state final."

It was a bout that had to be won for any shot at the state final.

Suhr vs. Habecker.

Two of the area's finest wrestlers in a six-minute match to see who would represent Section 5 in the state tournament, and who would not.

For Habecker, a sixth-place finisher in the state last year at 155, it was the end of a high school career.

For Suhr, it was a chance to say he is the best.

He did so — twice — in the final moments of his state-qualifying bout at Brockport State. He looked at the score-

board, which had him ahead, 7-5, and said to himself, "I'm No. 1. I'm No. 1 in the state."

Suhr is one of 14 individuals from Section 5 heading to Syracuse for their first state tournament, Friday and Saturday at the Onondaga County War Memorial. Habecker and Waterloo's Tom Finnerty were the only underclassmen on last year's team, and neither will return.

"I'm winning next week," said Suhr, who is joined by 138-pound Spencerport classmate Mike LoPresti, three individuals from Brighton (Greg Lechner at 145, Ben Weinthal at 167 and Todd Mirabella at 177), two from East Rochester (Steve Marcoccia at 105 and Mike Condello at 132) and wrestlers from seven other schools on Section 5's team.

"This was the toughest match in the state."

The bout was scoreless after one period. One observer said the two were "cautious in respect" for each other.

Suhr chose the down position to start the second period and escaped within eight seconds for a 1-0 edge. He scored a takedown 40 seconds later for a 3-0 lead.

Habecker escaped with :58 left in the second period, but Suhr scored a takedown with :07 to go for a 5-1 advantage.

This time Habecker chose the down position and escaped. But Suhr took him down once more for a 7-2 lead with :53 left in the match.

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Suhr wins big one against Habecker

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Habecker escaped a took down Suhr in the final 30 seconds to come within two.

"I knew I was better than him," said Suhr, who is 33-1 on the season and 102-15 over four years.

"And I had to prove I was better."

"Some matches I'm not into it," he admitted. "But when I'm into it there isn't anybody anywhere that can beat me. I don't care who it is."

That included Habecker, who entered the bout with a 34-1 season record and 132-13-1 career mark.

Spencerport Coach Bill Jacoutot said, "He's a delicate kid to handle. He has so much talent and so much is expected of him. He was like a prophecy. From a very early age people knew he was going to do well. That put a lot of pressure on him, too much pressure."

"He's like the guy who's supposed to hit a home run every time up at bat."

Suhr and Habecker never met in a high school match before last night. But they had wrestled three times in off-season tournaments — Suhr won twice and Habecker once last summer.

That loss made Suhr "hungry."

"It meant a lot to beat that kid," he said after his final.

Here's a look at the 14 champions:

91 pounds — Tim McKee, a junior from Bath and the Class B runner-up a week ago, scored a 6-1 decision over Brighton junior and Class A champion Mitch Stern. McKee is 33-2 on the season.

98 — Kerry Foster, a freshman from Canandaigua with a 29-5-1 record, defeated ER sophomore Sean Rucker, 8-0. Rucker, a three-time Class B champ, was the Super Sectional runner-up behind Waterloo's Finnerty last year at 91. He defeated Finnerty in this year's semifinals, 12-2. Foster, whose brother, Tracy, was a state participant last season at 126, won the Class A title a week ago.

105 — Marcoccia, a sophomore and the Class B champion with a 26-4-2 record, downed Lyons sophomore and Class C champ Lucas Dobbins, 4-2.

112 — Class A champion Dave Pitoni of Hilton, a senior, won his 100th varsity match with a 9-3 decision over Bath senior Jim Hopkins. Pitoni has a season record of 33-2-1 and a career mark of 100-16-1.

119 — Byron-Bergen's Brian Reed, an undefeated (34-0) senior, survived being turned to his back twice in the third period for a 12-7 decision over Spencerport junior Ray Lechase. Reed, a three-time Class C champ, has a career record of 126-20-1.

126 — Wayne senior Ron Gross, a four-time Class B champion with a 135-21 career record, defeated ER senior Bill Herko, 12-5.

132 — Condello, a senior with a 29-4-1 record, decisioned previously undefeated Batavia senior Kelly Boyle, 10-4. Boyle (29-1) was the Monroe County League tournament champion.

138 — LoPresti improved his season record to 33-2 and career mark to 113-23-1 with a pin over Lyndonville junior Gary Bayne at 3:17.

145 — Lechner, a senior, remained undefeated (36-0) with a 5-0 decision over Wayne senior Jeff Howard.

155 — In the match of the night, Suhr decisioned Habecker. Suhr became his school's fifth 100-match winner in the second of four state-qualifying bouts.

167 — Weinthal, a senior, recorded a 14-5 victory over previously undefeated Pavilion senior Greg Leitten (29-1).

177 — Mirabella, another senior, joined teammates Lechner and Weinthal with a pin over Addison senior Gary Hively at 4:39.

215 — Bishop Kearney senior Mike Fusilli (35-1), an Empire State Games gold medalist, pinned Irondequoit junior Shawn Cavanaugh at 1:35.

250 — Batavia junior Joe Amico decisioned Newark senior Scott Pieters, 9-5.