

# State wrestling title final goal for Waterloo's Knisely

By John Moriello ★  
Democrat and Chronicle

Each wrestling match remains a distinct memory in the mind of Shawn Knisely, who can even recite details of how brackets were set up in particular tournaments three seasons ago.

To others, though, the Waterloo senior's triumphs have been so frequent that they begin to blend together in the mind. Even impressive tournament accomplishments, like his fourth straight Panthers Invitational crown at Geneva last weekend, barely rate a compliment these days.

"People are asking things like, 'What did you do last year that you didn't do the year before?'" Knisely said yesterday.

The answer, of course, is virtually nothing. Knisely has done it all, with the exception of winning a state championship — and began accomplishing it in the

ninth grade. He owns three Section 5 Class B championships, a fifth-place state finish in 1987 and more than 100 career victories.

All that remains is a trip to the top of the state meet awards stand March 4 at the Onondaga War Memorial. It doesn't require an overly imaginative mind to picture him there, either.

"They raise your hand more than 100 times," Waterloo Coach Abe Meyers said, "you must be doing something right."

Knisely's record stood at 116-13-2 (.886) entering last night's 112-pound final in the ninth annual Clayton Barnard Memorial at Hilton. He scored an impressive 11-2 decision over Brighton's Pat O'Keefe in the morning semifinals to set up a match with Spencerport's Jon Raines.

Knisely's only loss this season in 20 matches has been to Canandaigua's Kerry Foster, a 6-2 decision that started the

Knisely mental archives in motion.

"That was the first league loss I ever had," Knisely said. "I sat down after that and started trying to think of the last one I lost. I remember a tie with Kerry as a freshman and tying Bobby Pollino (of Geneva) once."

It doesn't take Knisely, nor anyone else, any time to recall all his sectional losses. There haven't been any. He won the 91-pound class as a freshman and reached the semifinals of the state qualifier before bowing out to Brighton's Mitch Stern.

Knisely won the sectionals at 98 as a sophomore and then avenged the loss to Stern en route to winning the 11-county region's state qualifier.

"That was most enjoyable," he said. "I scored five points on him in the first 30 seconds and then sat on him."

Last year wasn't quite as pleasurable. Knisely, whose brother Jason placed third

as a freshman last winter in the 98-pound sectionals, competed at 112 pounds to insure that he'd make weight for the post-season meets.

He earned his annual sectional championship, then lost to Class A champ Anthony Calderon of Edison in the state qualifier semifinals.

Finally, people could answer their own question: What did you do last year that you didn't do the year before?

Knisely, a smart 17-year-old who talks about his visit to the University of Pennsylvania in one breath but claims "I'm not in that class" in the next, sensed trouble coming last season. He had made the transition from nothing-to-lose freshman to state contender too quickly.

"I wrestled so badly in the first two tournaments," he said, adding that he usually is a little bit of a slow starter. "I was atrocious. I put so much pressure on me. I was on top now and all these peo-

ple wanted me."

Knisely has a few things going for him this year other than added physical and mental maturity. Meyers said Knisely is certified for 105 pounds. That gives him the advantage of being able to look at the competition for the next couple of weeks and then deciding which class would be best to enter for sectionals.

He also has a good recollection of significant moments in past matches and an attitude that doesn't permit him to take reckless chances.

"I worry about everybody so much it's ridiculous," he said.

Knisely carries that cautious attitude onto the mat, Meyers said.

"He's tough to score on because he's more of a defensive wrestler," the coach said. "His theory is, 'If a guy doesn't score on me, I've got a good chance to win.'"