



Mills thrills home crowd

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PRINCETON — It wouldn't have been unusual if Gene Mills was disappointed about wrestling for a national collegiate title so close to home. But Mills insisted all along that he wanted to win it at Princeton, in front of his friends, family and home state. And his friends and family were there, right down to 7 1/4-week-old nephew Jason, to cheer Mills on in his attempt to win a second NCAA gold medal.

Mills didn't let any of his fans down. He pinned John Jartuppee of Central Michigan in 6:35, and won the Most Outstanding Wrestler award as well, to conclude a fabulous college career at Syracuse.

"My whole block, a lot of people from my town and my old high school (DePaul) were here tonight," he said, more relaxed than he had been in three days. "I'm glad I won it here at Princeton."

TOM MARTUCCI OF Trenton State and Palisades Park had similar sentiments. "It had a lot to do with it, wrestling in front of my home state. It helped." Martucci, the only Division III finalist, won the 190-pound title, 4-3, over Tony Mantella of Temple, the only unseeded wrestler in the finals.

North Jersey did get an unexpected disappointment in the last bout in Jadwin Gym Saturday night, however, when Bruce Baumgartner, the Indiana State junior from Manchester High, was pinned in the third period by Lou Banach of Iowa.

For Baumgartner, it was his first lose of the year after 40 wins and his second straight loss in the heavyweight finals. For Banach, it was revenge for getting pinned by Baumgartner earlier this year, and also gave the Banach family of Port Jervis, N.Y. its second championship in less than an hour, coming close on the heels of twin brother Ed's pin in the 177 finals.

THE 116 CHAMPIONSHIP bout followed Mills' usual script. He started out slowly, giving up the opening takedown quickly, and led by just 5-3 after the first period. "A lot of people got me in the first period because I'm really sloppy then," he said.

But he was soon down to business, scoring five back points in the final 1:15 of the second period for a 13-5 lead. Another near-fall and then the pinning move followed in the final frame.

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Mills wins second championship

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"I used the Mills half," he said, referring to the half nelson he has perfected from his knees. "I go straight over his head and he's not expecting it — he's expecting me to run around to try to turn him."

It was Mills' fourth fall of the tournament — his only other win was a 30-4 decision in the semifinals — but although it tied him with Oklahoma State 126 Jerry Kelly for the most falls, Kelly won the pinning award for less elapsed time.

MILLS, WHO SAID he had tougher battles with the scales than with his flesh-and-blood opponents, plans to

stay at 119 pounds for two tournaments against the Russians, then increase his weight to 125 for bouts after that.

"With Gino, it was a guaranteed six points," said assistant coach John Janiak. "He's just got an aura about him — he gives confidence to the next guy in the lineup and the next guy and the next. We have a good nucleus back for next year, but it isn't going to be the same. It's hard to replace the best wrestler in the world."

Martucci's bout was the epitome of what many people have said is the overcautious nature of the NCAA final round. He and Mantella

wrestled a scoreless first period, both getting warned with four seconds left. In the second, Martucci got one stall point and Mantella two.

But with 24 seconds left in the middle frame, Martucci made the one move that seems to characterize his victories and scored a takedown. He added an escape in the third period for his third straight one-point victory.

"I knew we both had similar styles," said Martucci. "I just kept working him, but when I got with the stalling I had to push myself a little harder. I was very cautious because I knew he had a good shuck."

No matter how carefully wrestled it was, the victory gave Martucci the most improbable win in the finals. "It's great. It's the greatest thing in the world," he beamed. "If you go out and say you're a Division III national champion, people say so what. But I'm a Division I national champion now."

Baumgartner's loss was unexpected, since he was the top seed, undefeated and had already pinned Banach in under two minutes earlier this season. But from a 3-3 tie, Banach took charge with a two-point near fall late in the second period and then caught Baumgartner in a cradle at the 5:45 mark.