

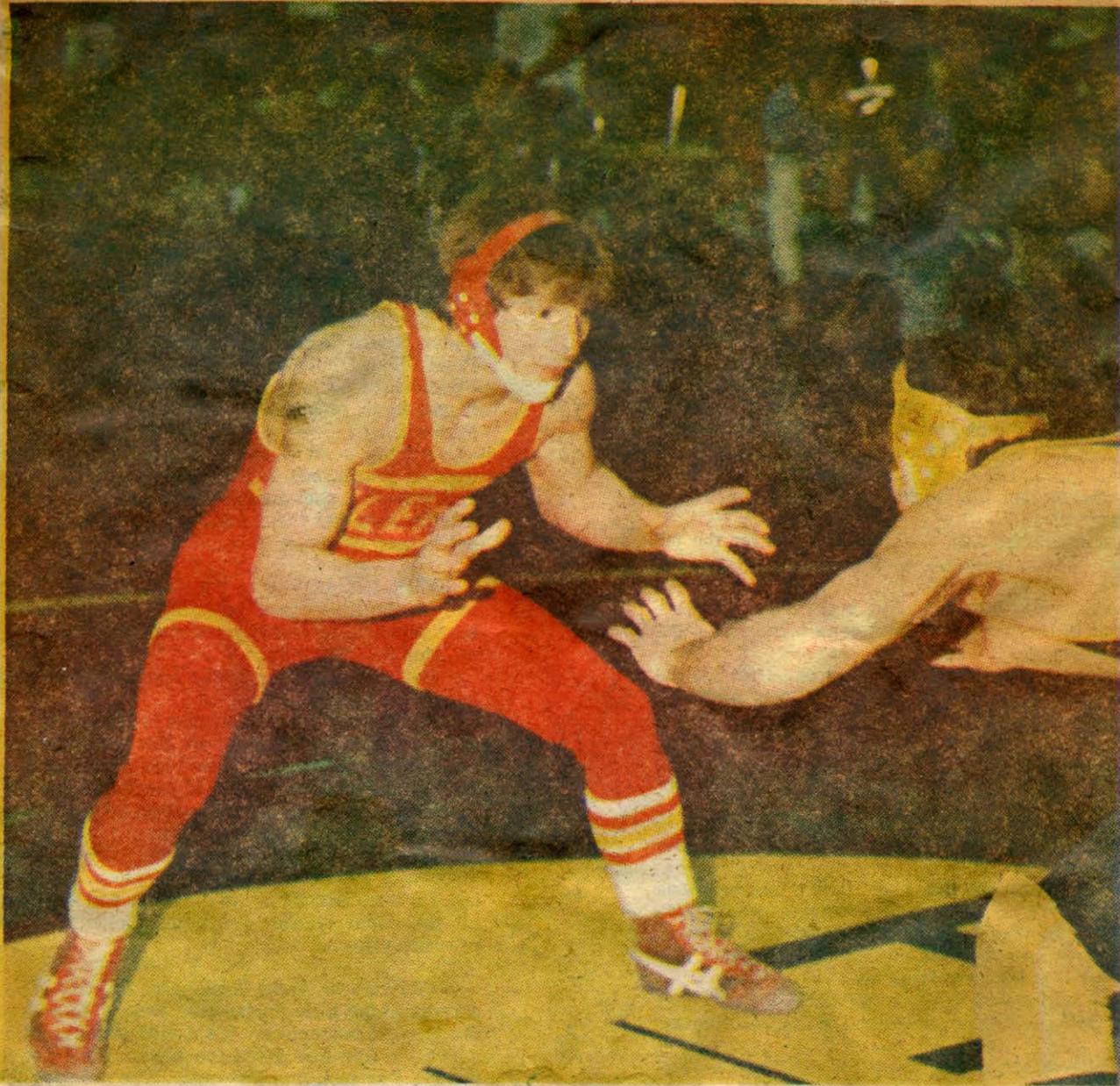
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Clar Anderson

Wrestles

With Mat Fame



Stretching Out Before a Match



Clar Squares Off Against Kenmore East's Chris Moore.

By STEVE SCHUELEIN

To fully appreciate wrestler Clar Anderson of Olean High School, you have to go back to Feb. 2 and visit a packed gym in Canandaigua.

Anderson weighed in at 126 pounds for the double-dual meet against Canandaigua and East Rochester. The schools boasted the two best 132-pounders in Section V, Matt King of Canandaigua and Romeo Battazzi of East Rochester.

Anderson elected to move up a weight class and tangle with both on their home grounds.

Anderson lent a deaf ear to a partisan crowd and decisioned Battazzi, 5-1, and King, 5-2. "He wanted to wrestle them for the competition," explained Coach Jim Myers.

The blond strongboy is finding competition scarce. Many other state threats at his weight class decided months ago to fatten up to 132 or shrink to 119 and stay out of his way.

IF REPUTATIONS could kill, Anderson would be behind bars instead of competing in his final Section VI wrestling tournament today at Sweet Home High School.

He seeks a fourth straight trip to the intersectional tournament next weekend at Syracuse, an unprecedented feat in the Western New York section.

Only Kyle Grunwald of Pioneer has won two state titles for Section VI, a record Anderson hopes to equal.

Section VI has produced its share of top-quality champions. Keith Stearns of Pioneer went on

to win the NCAA Division I crown at Oklahoma University two years ago. Bob Rust of Kenmore East earned NCAA runner-up honors at Syracuse University. Bob Sloand of Niagara-Wheatfield was an NCAA fourth-place finisher at Lehigh. But none left high school with a record approaching that of Anderson.

With a first-round triumph Friday, Anderson raised his career record to won-152 lost-7 tied-1. The victory total is the most of any scholastic wrestler in Empire State history.

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SINCE THE FIRST 16 victories came as an eighth-grader, Anderson can remove any question of leadership in a statistical debate with followers of Ithaca's Mark Iacovelli. Iacovelli won 135 matches from 1974-77, all in grades 9-12. Anderson now can claim 136 victories in grades 9-12, with a possible six more in remaining sectional and intersectional matches.

After his 16-3 eighth-grade season, Anderson went 36-1-1 as a freshman, 34-2 as a sophomore and 35-1 as a junior. He is 31-0 this year.

During four years of high school, he has never lost a match to a Section VI foe. Fredonia 119-pounder Alex Conti can claim the lone draw.

The price of success has been high for the 18-year-old senior, the fourth of five children of Don and Wilma Anderson.

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TO BECOME THE BEST, Anderson has waged a three-month war against the growth of

his body each winter. The ritual includes starvation, fatigue and dehydration. The symptoms are irritability, a gaunt look and a drop in grades.

Mrs. Anderson worries about her son's health and questions the value of crash dieting but has resigned herself to make the stretch as tolerable as possible.

"Dad and I decided to fast with him this week," said Mrs. Anderson. "He just drinks water. He was 14 pounds over at the beginning of the week but was only four pounds from making weight Wednesday.

"He's not very sensible in how he goes about it," said his mother. "After a tournament, he'll go out and celebrate with pizza and milkshakes and put it all on in one day. I'd just like him to lose the weight gradually instead of all at one time.

"He's so weak, he just comes home and falls asleep," said his mother. "Naturally, his grades suffer."

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"YOU CAN REALLY see the difference in his face," added Mrs. Anderson. "The night before weigh-ins for a tourney, he has that hollow-cheekbone look. Right after a tourney, his face will fill out and his dimples will come in.

"It didn't seem quite so bad last year (when he was at 112)," recalled Mrs. Anderson. "I'll be glad when it's over."

At birth, one might have guessed that Clar Dex Anderson would grow up to be somebody special. His official name could only be repeated in the New York Stock Exchange.

"His grandfather on Don's side was named Clarence and his grandfather on my side was Dexter," explained his mother. "I didn't like either name. So we decided to shorten them to Clar for his first name and Dex for his middle name."

Clar's dad runs a plumbing and heating business, and his mother was a physical-education teacher until taking a year's sabbatical leave this year. They remember the 1970s as the Decade of the Mat.

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"**OUR OLDEST SON**, Dale (now 25), came home from school one day as a freshman and said Olean was starting wrestling, and he was going out," recalled Mrs. Anderson. "I looked at him kind of funny and just laughed. I didn't know what it was."

She soon learned all about it. Kirk, now 23, was introduced to the sport and developed into a scholastic star, earning Section VI honors and third place in the intersectionals at 138 pounds in 1974. At the University of Buffalo, he was an All-American and co-captain of UB's 1978 NCAA Division III champions.

While Mike Foster was laying the groundwork for wrestling at the high school, Myers began a YMCA mat program. One of his first students was 50 pounds of blond enthusiasm named Clar Anderson.

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"**HE STARTED** in the second grade, and even then showed unusual promise," said Myers, who took over when Foster left last year to become athletic director and football coach at Canandaigua. "We used to be in a YMCA League with Pennsylvania 'Y's and compete in a Junior Olympics at Portville. Even then, he was winning titles for 8-and-under."

Anderson committed himself to the ascetic life shortly after earning Outstanding Wrestler honors in the Sweet Home Invitational in January.

"We talked about it for a long time (going 126 or 132)," explained Myers. "But for his individual chances going back to the states and the team lineup, he knew it would be better at 126."

Despite years of wrestling, including the three-month torture

chamber, Anderson shows no signs of "burning out," a common affliction among overexposed mat addicts.

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"**I THINK THE** reason is that he doesn't cut weight the rest of the year," said Foster. "He doesn't win all the time, but it's fun that way." He wrestled at 143 in the National Federation meet at Iowa last summer.

Anderson's only true fear of the unknown came in his first intersectional visit as a freshman at 91. "I was scared to death," said Clar in an embarrassed tone. "I lost a (6-2) decision to Al DeStefanis (of Locust Valley, L.I.) in the first match. But then I loosened up and came all the way back through the wrestlebacks. I ended up beating DeStefanis for third."

"Clar's the most complete wrestler I've ever coached," said Foster. "Chris Leichtweis (1978 Olean state champ) was as strong but he only had the single-leg takedown. Clar knows all the moves."

Despite his accomplishments, Anderson was not fully recog-

nized until his state title last year. As a sophomore, he beat John McHugh of Sweet Home in a sectional final classic at 105 but came up disappointingly flat in the states the next week and lost the first two matches in the low point of his career.

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"**I THINK, BEING YOUNG**, he got to reading his clippings and looked right past the first kid," said Foster. "After that, he lost his composure and wasn't mentally there in the wrestlebacks."

He made up for it last year when his opening opponent in a brutal 112-pound weight class was the same Joe Rabin of Elmont, L.I., who had bounced him out of the wrestlebacks the year before.

After the win last year, Anderson slumped into a nearby chair. Perspiration dripped from his chin as he stared blankly at the roaring crowd and the following match.

Then a smile lined his face. Clar wasn't thinking about the championship or the trophy he would receive. For the first time in three months, he realized, he could pig out on pizza and milk shakes and not feel guilty.