



the  
**GRISTMILL**  
by  
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Every winter, I like to "plug" the sport of wrestling in our public schools. Considering the merits of the sport for our sons, it gets only the minimum of public recognition and publicity. If it had a little more prestige, wrestling might be more popular and the competition keener. Team sports are fine but life isn't exactly a team effort but an individual performance. A wrestler is all alone when he is on the mats and believe me, this is terrific training.

The Genesee-Orleans Wrestling League wound up its season last weekend with its annual tournament at Lyndonville. The addition of newcomers, Le Roy and Kendall made seven schools to vie for the individual crowns in twelve weight classes. We arrived in time to see the consolation matches where the afternoon losers wrestle for third and fourth places and to witness the championship matches. The gym wasn't filled but the enthusiasm made up for the empty seating capacity.

I have seen several of these tournaments since in six of the seven years of the league, an Almquist has participated. This explains my incentive to venture outdoors in mid-winter.

This year's program was by far the best planned and conducted meet. The Lyndonville personnel, headed by Arnold Hartsen, athletic director and Coach Fred Large, tournament chairman, outdid themselves. From a spectator point of view, we could see the matches easily, the referees were decisive, the matches were on time and I thought it all went off smoothly without criticism from any corner.

One of the sideshows of a wrestling tournament is the antics of wrestling coaches. Each coach "wrestles" every minute with every boy, but his emotional expression crops out in different ways. Some can sit serenely; some twist and turn and agonize whereas others just let themselves go and shout words of advice or encouragement.

By and large, there is little a coach can do to help once his boy is wrestling. The wrestler is too engrossed with his fight to cock an ear for instructions from the sideline. However, in one instance, I did see a boy losing until his coach got his attention for a moment. The coach gave him a physical move and the next thing I saw, the lad was almost pinning his opponent. He went on to win.

The coaches do add color to a meet and they are fun to watch. If exuberant enthusiasm is any criteria for success, the league had better watch Don Santini and his Le Roy Knights. Their first year in league competition, Le Roy captured several third places which is excellent. During the consolation matches, Santini often had boys going on both mats at the same time. Mr. Santini did his share of pacing and yelling busily going from mat to mat, encouraging his promising youngsters along. They will be tough next year.

Team honors went to host Lyndonville who had gone undefeated for 35 matches until Byron-Bergen upended their enviable record this winter. Pavilion was a close second with each school having eight men in the finals. Lyndonville won 5, Pavilion took 4, Byron-Bergen captured 2 and Holley went to over-time to win one title. For the first time in history, Pembroke was blanked, having only two boys to compete in the finals.

The coaches chose 136 lb. class, two time champion Russ Bentley of Lyndonville as the outstanding wrestler in the tournament. He enters Alfred Tech this Fall whose president, Dave Huntington was a wrestling team-mate of mine at Cornell. Russ will do well in collegiate competition.

Other repeat champions include Kevin Brooks, Pavilion 123 class, Jim Tamburi, Lyndonville, 141 class; Willie Howell, Lyndonville in 168 class and Derwood James, Lyndonville in

the 183 class.

The 96 lb. class saw freshman Rickie Menzie of Bergen, my postman's son, win decisively over Barry Bodine of Pavilion when Bodine "ran out of gas" in the final period. Ron Dingler who has been a stalwart for Lyndonville won handily over less experienced Coe of Pavilion in the next class at 106 lbs.

Holley's lone win with four finalists saw powerfully built Francis Fiannaca defeat Lusk of Lyndonville in overtime in the 115 lb. class. Smooth working Kevin Brooks, Pavilion had his hands filled with leg expert Tom Allport of Lyndonville in a close match in the next class.

Undefeated Rick MacDuffie, Pavilion at 130 lbs. was held even for two periods by Ben Coger of Lyndonville before winning 7-3.

If homage can be attributed to losers, certainly the Fitzsimmons boys of Pavilion deserve credit since they lost to two of the best in any league, Bentley and Tombari of Lyndonville. Bruce Fitzsimmons almost pulled the upset of the evening when Tombari won on riding time, 2-1. These two classes, the 136 and 141 were hotly contested so even in defeat, the Fitzsimmons brothers, represented a lot of quality.

The next class is a pleasure to report. In the finals for a third year, son Steve Almquist won over Dan Mawn of Holley 6-2. Steve, like many of these champions was undefeated for the entire season.

At 157, Dave Andrews, Pavilion narrowly defeated a rugged Joe Brongo of Holley. Joe was ahead in the final seconds when Dave scored a 2 point reversal. Next came Lyndonville's cream when Willie Howell and Der-

wood James scored quick pins to pick up their trophies.

The heavyweight division was a definite upset when undefeated Dick Warner of Pembroke lost a close decision to lighter but faster Tom Leitten of Pavilion. Dick was Pembroke's big hope for a championship.

This week, these winners will become a team and advance into sectional competition. Some may emerge as winners since better wrestlers are developing on the local scene.

High school wrestling is not an easy sport and most boys shy away from the self discipline required to become competitive. The rewards in wrestling are not commensurate with the sacrifices. A part of the attractiveness in athletics is public recognition, the "feeding the ego" which boys need. School athletic directors fail their programs they do not fully use the facilities of the news media. An exception to this is the excellent job Notre Dame does in publicizing wrestling.

This column is dedicated to scholastic wrestling recognition, not only because of my affection and nostalgia for the sport but that it fills a void in giving due credit to a fine group of athletes.