



By Ralph Vacchiano
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but top runners-up steal show

Fulton was a runaway winner of the Section Three wrestling championships Saturday at the Onondaga County War Memorial. But wrestlers from Fowler and New Hartford stole center stage.

Fulton finished with 100 points, far ahead of second-place Fowler (69) and third-place New Hartford (67½). But the Falcons and Spartans each had three sectional champions, while Fulton, the state's top-ranked team, had only one.

With three champions on their side, losing the team title mattered little to both Fowler coach Rick Spicer and New Hartford coach Tom Pauley. **2-24-91**

"Coming in, all I heard was we had three possible champions and maybe a team title," Spicer said. "I didn't want to hear about it. There were only three kids that I wanted to worry about."

Those three seniors — 91-pound Todd Rutecki, 105-pound Mike Jamison and 138-pound Kareeb Howard — not only won titles, but dominated their weight classes, each winning the finals by at least seven points. The trio heads into the state tournament Saturday at the War Memorial, with a combined season record of 95-1-1.

Rutecki, 31-0, began the finals sweep with a 12-4 win over Cortland's Randy Coville. Jamison improved to 30-1-1 with a 7-0 decision over Craig Conant of Tully, and Howard remained undefeated at 34-0 with an 11-4 win over Pulaski's Brian Ferman.

For Fowler, the only school in the city of Syracuse with a wrestling program, it was the first time it has ever had three sectional champs.

"They said in the paper that not too many schools have had three sectional champions," Jamison said. "But we've been talking about it for a while and joking about it at practice. We've been wrestling all year round and preparing for this."

While the Falcons' wrestlers cruised through the finals, the three championships didn't come nearly as easy for New Hartford. **2-24-91**

Steve Caruso, 33-1, edged Fulton's Bill Hayden at 132 pounds and John Vitullo, 33-1, shutout Kurt Sykes of Madison, 5-0. But the real surprise for the Spartans came at 155 pounds. In that class, third-ranked Nate Hanna, 29-3-1, pinned Carthage's Rob Brooks at 2:48 to win the title.

"We knew we had the possibility of two champions," Pauley said, "but I was particularly impressed with Hanna. He struggled earlier in the day, but got stronger as the day went on."

The Spartans will send three wrestlers to the state tournament for the first time since 1981.

"We're thrilled, but we wish we could have done it a little more decisively," Pauley said. "But we'll take them as we can get them."

Fulton was awarded a trophy commemorating its No. 1 state ranking. But coach Mike Connors said the Raiders fell short of their goals.

Four of Fulton's 10 wrestlers lost early. Of the remaining six, four lost in the semi-finals. Only one — John Noel at 167 pounds — won a sectional championship.

Noel, 33-3, pinned General Brown's Clint Connor at 3:22.

"We hoped to get two wrestlers into the finals, and we did, but we came up a little short," Connors said. "But we won the team title, so I can't complain."

Neither can the coaches whose teams finished behind Fulton, especially those from New Hartford and Fowler.

"Honestly, it would be nice to have team title," Pauley said. "I'd love to have team that was ranked first in the state. But it doesn't matter if I can come in and take three sectional championships and take three kids to the states."

Baldwinsville, which finished fourth with 61½ points, will send two wrestlers to the state tournament: 112-pound Chris Cali and 126-pound Jim Loffredo. Cali, 3-6, advanced by winning a thriller against Whitesboro's Terry Showalter.

Showalter, a freshman, entered the match undefeated at 31-0, including a 12-0 win over Cali the previous Saturday in the Class A championships. Cali got his revenge with a 5-2 decision Saturday.

"I wanted another shot at him," Cali said. "I figured I'd give him a good run for his time." **2-24-91**

Bryan Roggie of Beaver River will represent Section Three in the 119-pound state championships Saturday. Roggie, 3-0, won a 3-0 decision over Dan Faldzinski of Vernon-Verona-Sherrill. The win was the 153rd of his career, tying a Section Three record.

The tournament's Most Outstanding Wrestler was Bruce Thomas of Chittenden. Thomas, 30-4, won the 215-pound championship with a 6-3 decision over previously undefeated Jason Gleasman of Adirondack.