

# Merritt Earns MOW

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SYRACUSE — A kid who's been wrestling like there's no tomorrow (no pun intended) was established the Most Outstanding Wrestler (MOW) at Saturday's Section Three finals which was marred by bitter controversy over a referee's In-decision.

Jeff Merritt, a transformed 155-pounder, pinned all four opponents Saturday, including South Jefferson's top seed Dave Jackowski in the final (3:59) to earn the most important award in Section Three wrestling.

Merritt, only a junior and the chief building block for Wayne Bleau's 1983-84 team, eked out teammate Mike Narewski and Oswego's Brian Akley in the balloting.

Narewski (30-1) and Akley (33-0) have been quietly plodding a return to the state finals as the two repeating Section Three titleists seek to avenge last year's second round Intersectional losses.

Akley's four wins Saturday extended his high school career to read 125-24-1, the second best all-time. Should he go all the way Saturday he will fall one win short of tying North Syracuse's Mike Catania (130) for the most wins ever.

Narewski, meanwhile, has pinned 11 of his last 14 opponents and has won his last 21 straight in awesome style. He should be the one to beat in the 145 class this weekend.

Merritt (25-5) won his fourth title and has rounded to form just in time to visit the state finals. He has won the Fulton Xmas title, the Class A title, the OHSL title and now the Section diadem.

One wrestler who did not win a title was Canastota's Mark Hood.

Either almost 3000 fans at the War Memorial didn't see what they saw or hear what they heard or Hood was fleeced out of his 119-pound title. 2-28-83

Hood was fleeced. The entire auditorium saw right.

Hood was leading 7-6 with only seconds left in his match with B'Ville's Kevin Johnson. Hood had Johnson in a side headlock as the clock ticked down to three seconds, two, and one.

As the audience arose to applaud the wrestlers, thinking Hood had won, the match continued beyond the buzzer. That is a fact. Johnson then pulled his head out and rolled over Hood.

What happened next caused a near riotous situation and an embarrassment for the tournament officials.

B'Ville coach Leo Johnson, acting on behalf of his son, assailed the back-up official wanting two points for the reversal. The bout official had alertly waved off any points because the clock had expired. Yet when the bout official came off the mat he was goaded into changing his mind.

The worst that could have happened did. The two wrestlers stood on the mat for almost five minutes going through fantastic overtures. The referees couldn't decide on a winner.

The longer the discussions persisted on the sidelines the more the crowd grew im-

patient and concerned. You would expect for a Sectional final that the least three referees could do was make a decisive call. Just make the call!

As it was, by declaration of the crowd's actions, they "guessed" wrong.

The same official who confidently waved off the would-be reversal marched onto the mat, gathered up the two kids' arms and raised Johnson's arm in triumph, 8-7. The ref changed his decision and Johnson's loud protestations may have helped.

The crowd responded predictably. They booed a good 10 minutes, loud enough so that the concessionaires outside the arena wanted to know what was going on. Foreign objects began to shower down from the stands. The announcer pleaded for restraint. Fights broke out in the stands and the men in blue had to break them up. It was a bad bad scene.

And this is how the tournament officials made the best of this ugly scene. No explanation was given over the microphone. No picture taking session occurred. Instead they snuck the award ceremony in during the 215-pound bout.

What was so unusual about this is that every other champion was announced. That's so fans could applaud and parents could go down and shoot pictures of the ceremony.

This particular coronation went off without fanfare, without guts. For what it was worth, tournament officials should have had held it inside the toilet. They did an injustice to Kevin Johnson by not staging his ceremony as they did the other 13 kids.

For the second straight week Baldwinsville (114.5), as expected, came away with the team trophy. They had placed seven wrestlers and had three champions. Fulton (98) edged out Canastota (94.5) in a struggle for second.

Fulton's Mark Caza, Dave Angeleri and Chuck Atkinson placed third and Ed Pollock was defeated in the quarter-finals.

Angeleri lost in overtime, 5-3, to RFA's John Balog, the eventual champion, but won, 5-2, in the wrestleback. Atkinson won by forfeit and Caza was pinned in the consolation.

Central Square's George Korthas also placed third after a 33 second pin, which was five seconds short of the quick-pin won by 250-pound runner-up, Jim Chambers. The Jordan-Elbridge heavy was pinned in the final by Lowville's Randy Morrison, who captured the aggregate award, 4x8:36.

## SECTION THREE CHAMPIONS

91 Youngs (M-E), 98 Gleeson (Can), 105 Pauley (NH), 112 Allen (Bv).

119 K. Johnson (Bv), 126 Balog (RFA), 132 Keating (NH), 138 Akley (Os).

145 Narewski (F), 155 Merritt (F), 167 Relyea (Can).

177 Conners (Bv), 215 Williams (Fow), 250 Morrison (Low).