



STATE WRESTLING TOURNAMENT

Section Three Fortunes Fall

■ Last year's state runners-up advance only five of 14 wrestlers in state competition.

By **NEIL KERR**
The Post-Standard

Led by returning state meet placewinners Pat Nardi of Mohawk, Ben New of Canastota and Rob Lawton of South Jefferson, host Section Three advanced five wrestlers into today's semifinal round of the 33rd annual New York State Intersectional Wrestling Tournament.

Competition resumes at 10 a.m. today, leading to consolation matches at 6 p.m. and title bouts at 8 p.m.

Seniors Nardi (33-0) at 91 pounds, New (43-0) at 126 and Lawton (41-0) at 138 all won two bouts Friday.

■ Nardi, sixth at 91 last year, survived two close calls to advance. He came from behind to edge Section One champion Wilkinson Prophete of Nyack 9-7 with an overtime takedown. He then nipped Section Six champion Ryan Fralick of Falconer, an eighth-grader, 3-2.

■ The Cornell University-bound New, fifth at 119 last year and 182-15 for his career, defeated Section 11 champion Ryan Bernholz of Mount Sinai 3-1, then pinned Section Eight champion Colin Curnuck of MacArthur at 5:40.

■ South Jefferson's Lawton, third at 132 in 1994 and now 78-1 over the past two seasons, beat Section One champ Scott Meltzer of Clarkstown 14-1, then trounced Mark Teischman of Baldwin, 9-2.

Of the three, pre-tournament favorite Lawton was perhaps most impressive.

"This is the best Rob has wrestled all year," said South Jefferson coach Pat Conners. "He's peaking now, after having had, first, an off-season shoulder injury, then a badly-sprained ankle back in December. Rob is so confident, he scares me."

That trio was joined by two other survivors of Friday's action — 155-pound Chris Roggie (42-0) of Beaver River and 167-pound Dan Marsch (39-1) of Whitesboro — for today's semifinals.

Roggie won twice, pinning Section 11's Chris Brodmerkel of West Islip in 5:20, then needing an overtime takedown to edge John Roden of Bethpage 5-3.

Marsch, favored to win the class despite the presence of defending champ Julius Smith of Ossining, wrestled just one match, pinning Frank Rapacki of Massapequa in the second period.

Marsch has lost only once all year, via injury default when he slammed an opponent in a holiday tournament.

The remaining nine members of the gold-uniformed host team all lost Friday and will compete in the consolation rounds today.

Overall, it was a somewhat dis-



MICHELLE GABEL/The Post-Standard

Fowler's Jarmon Howard struggles during his first-round match against Brad Tanton of Vestal at 215 pounds in the state meet at the Onondaga County War Memorial. Howard, the Section Three champion, lost 8-4 to Tanton of Section Four.

appointing showing by Section Three, which lagged in seventh place with 42 points in the team scoring race after having placed second in 1994.

"We had some tough draws. We knew that going in," said Fowler coach Rick Spicer. "I think you'll see Section Three come back strong in the wrestlebacks Saturday. We're going to get a lot of points tomorrow. A lot of our kids who lost Friday are going to end up placing somewhere among the top six."

An hour earlier, Spicer had watched as his 215-pound Section Three champion, Jarmon Howard, gave up two near-falls in the third period to lose 8-4 to Vestal junior Brad Tanton.

Leading the team scoring was powerful Section Four (Binghamton-Elmira team) which virtually locked up first place with 96 points.

That section sent 12 of its champions into the semifinals in the process.

Section Four was paced by an impressive import from Georgia in the former Soviet Union, Nick Muzashvili of Unatego.

Muzashvili advanced to the semifinals at 177 pounds where he's the favorite. Muzashvili won his quarterfinal bout over Gene

Roggie (40-0) of Beaver River by an 18-12 score, but saw a streak of nine straight wins via technical fall end in that hard-fought match.

"That guy is the strongest and quickest guy I wrestled all year. He's exceptional. He deserved the win," said Roggie, last year's runner-up at 167.

Though he wrestled well in defeat, Roggie's loss was predictable since Muzashvili is among the top two or three athletes competing in Syracuse this weekend.

However, a loss which came as a shock occurred at 112 pounds, where defending 98-pound champion Dave Caruso of New Hartford dropped an overtime 4-2 decision to junior Akil Coad (30-3) of Long Beach, Long Island.

Caruso was ahead 2-0 into the final minute of the match before getting caught in a cradle hold and giving up two points to force overtime. Coad then got a quick takedown against the Syracuse University-bound Caruso to post Friday's biggest upset.

While Caruso lost, the other three defending state champions who returned to Syracuse all reached today's semifinal round.

Defending 91-pound champion P.J. Bory (31-1) of Suffern, now at 105, defending 112-pound king Rasan Phifer (17-0) of Longwood and the 1994 167-pound champi-

on, Julius Smith of Ossining, all won handily.

Bory won 3-1 in the quarterfinals over Section Three champion and Jordan-Elbridge junior Tony Burkinshaw, now 35-3 for the year and still alive in the consolation round.

In other Section Three results:

■ At 98, Lowville eighth-grader Aaron Fahey was no match for returning Section Nine champion Steve Garland of Middletown, losing by technical fall at 2:37 of the match.

■ At 119, unbeaten Matt Mahar of Fulton gave up five points in the third period (take-down, near-fall) and lost a 9-6 match to Section Four champion Dylan Urban of Union-Endicott, the class favorite.

■ At 132, Canastota senior Robert Buyea dropped a hard-fought 3-2 match to class favorite Jeff Reese (42-1) of Elmira Southside.

■ At 145, sophomore Derek Racino of Vernon-Verona-Sherrill surrendered a decisive third-period takedown to lose 4-3 to Section Six champion Josh States of Lockport.

■ At 250, Marcellus' Jason Clarke was leading early before losing a heartbreaking overtime match 7-5 to Section Eight champion Brian Moeller of Clarke.