

Matias Wins Match for the Ages

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By Gregg Sarra
STAFF WRITER

Centereach's Keith Matias and Hauppauge's Tom Ruggiero brought the house down yesterday in a 105-pound semifinal match at the Suffolk County Wrestling Championships at Longwood.

The memorable match was a sudden-death overtime affair that ended when Matias rode Ruggiero out over a 30-second period for an overtime criteria win. The capacity crowd of 2,000 gave the two a prolonged and rousing standing ovation at the match's conclusion.

"One of the best matches I've ever seen," Hauppauge coach Chris Messina said. "I wanted Tommy [Ruggiero] to choose top [in referee's position] in the overtime, but I can't second-guess him. He felt he could get out from the bottom."

But Matias was too strong and held Ruggiero down for the win.

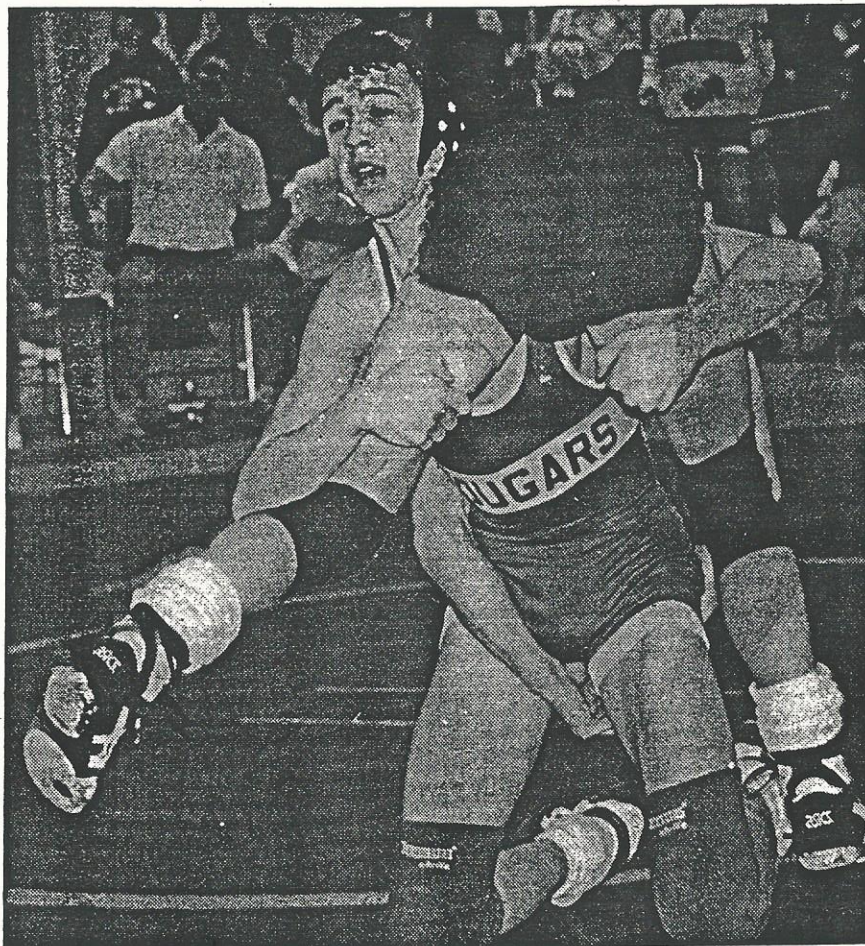
"I was beating him 7-1 earlier this year and he came back to win 12-10," Matias said. "It put me in a mid-season slump and if it wasn't for my father taking the time to help me mentally and physically, my season would have been over. This is a very big victory."

The two were tied at 6 after three periods and a dramatic two-minute overtime, in which no takedowns were gained but many were offered.

"He looked tired in sudden death," Matias said. "That motivated me and I gained momentum."

Matias rode that momentum into last night's final against Amityville's Len Jacobs.

The team picture came into focus at the end of the semifinals. Sachem moved seven wrestlers into the finals



Centereach's Keith Matias (knees on mat) has control of Hauppauge's Tom Ruggiero in their 105-pound match. Matias won by overtime criteria.

and had 187½ points to clinch its first title since 1989. The victory dethroned two-time champion Longwood.

"It's been a total team effort," Sachem coach Jack Mahoney said.

"These kids wrestled two practices a day during the week we had off. Even the varsity letter-winners who weren't in the tournament came to practice and helped the qualifiers prepare. I'm proud of everyone."

The Flaming Arrows had only one of eight semifinalists lose, and the was only because Chris Golini lost to teammate Chris Asaro, 7-2, at 145 pounds.

"I guess we had no choice in that weight," Mahoney said with a smile.

Longwood had three wrestlers in the finals and was in second place.

Defending county champion Kerry McCoy of Longwood moved into the final by pinning Mark Maurino of Half Hollow Hills East in 3:17. McCoy was to meet Centereach's Robert Hughes, a 5-3 winner over North Babylon's John Sparacio. It was Sparacio's (28-1) first loss.

Lindenhurst qualified three undefeated finalists in consecutive weights. They were Lenny Fries (119, 21-0), Mike Mannarino (126, 25-0-1) and Ed Aulino (132, 26-0).

Huntington, with only eight wrestlers in the tournament, have three finalists. Among them is Jim Amira, who upset top-seeded Rocky Bracero of Newfield, 9-3, in the semis.

SUFFOLK COUNTY WRESTLING CHAMPIONSHIPS At Longwood — Semifinal Results

91 — Brian Fischerich (Hunt) pinned Ryan Bernholtz (MS), 4:57; Tom Longobardi (Islip) dec. Brian Cusati (PM), 4-3. 96 — Jim Amira (Hunt) dec. Rocky Bracero (Newfield), 9-3; John Carnevalina (Sa) dec. Matt Marks (KP), 5-1. 105 — Keith Matias (Cent) dec. Tom Ruggiero (Haup), 6-6, overtime criteria; Len Jacobs (Am) dec. Tim Puskas (Hunt), 13-7. 112 — Tom Pascarella (HHHE) dec. Tom Golembeski (Bab), 5-3; Rob Harris (Sa) dec. Bill Carey (DP), 12-1. 119 — Elias Perez (Hunt) dec. Tom Chapman (Riv), 13-6; Lenny Fries (Lind) def. Nick Mancuso (HB) by tech. fall, 5:26. 126 — Sean O'Hara (Sa) dec. Chris Mordente (Bell), 3-0; Mike Mannarino (Lind) dec. Travis Smith (Hunt), 7-2. 132 — Chad Henkin (RP) dec. Junius Gradney (Long), 1-0; Russell Jones (Wy) dec. Jeff Galvez (HHHE), 2-1. 138 — Duane Thompson (Long) dec. Adam Corso (W), 8-2; Ed Aulino (Lind) dec. Jim Salvaggio (KP), 7-2. 145 — John Lange (Long) won by forfeit over Rich Poshnell (HB); Chris Asaro (Sa) dec. Chris Golini (Sa), 7-2. 155 — Jason Kraft (Sa) dec. Charles Gleis (BS), 13-5; Arthur Arden (Haup) pinned K.C. Armstrong (P.J.), 4:39. 167 — Brett Lassen (Corn) dec. Dwayne Dorsett (BS), 9-5; Rob Wylie (RP) dec. Christian Doller (W), 2-1. 177 — Kerry McCoy (Long) pinned Mark Maurino (HHHE), 3:17; Robert Hughes (Cent) dec. John Sparacio (NB), 5-3. Hwy — John Aebly (Sa) dec. Bob Farina (HHHE), 2-0; John LaVecchia (KP) pinned Greg Lent (PM), 2:28. 250 — Jason Cohen (PM) dec. Vin Mulhare (Long), 8-0; Scott McAndrew (Sa) dec. Frank Pettito (Comm), 9-6. Team Scores — Sachem 187½, Longwood 111½, Huntington 103½, Lindenhurst 86½, Half Hollow Hills East 71½, Rocky Point 68, Kings Park 64, Hauppauge 61, West Islip 59, Centereach 46.

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