

A Draw, Then A Loss

Top wrestlers out in tough 1st round

By Gregg Sarra

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So just how tough is the Suffolk County wrestling tournament?

Well, consider that 10 wrestlers with at least 20 wins each and no more than five losses apiece were sent home after the first round.

That's how tough it is.

Just ask Copiague's Ryan Richardson (112) what he thinks. Richardson, a third-place finisher in the 1991 tournament, was ousted in the first round by Longwood's Jim Missale in a 3-2 decision. Richardson drew Sachem's defending state champion John Carvalheira in the first round of last year's tournament and lost, 4-3.

Or ask top seeds, Matt Maltese (132) of Lindenhurst and Rich Medico (155) of Huntington, who also were eliminated in the first round.

"We'll send those kids home with nothing to show for all of the time and hard work they put in this year," said Patchogue-Medford coach Craig Kelskey. "And why? Because we have an automatic seeding criteria that matches kids by chance instead of performance. And with no wrestleback round for the first-round losers, we as coaches do a real injustice to these kids. Quality kids get no shot for a place finish if they get a bad draw and lose a tough first-round match . . . It's horrible."

Despite the automatic seeding, all three defending state champions advanced to the semifinals of the Suffolk County Dr. Robert Fallot Wrestling Championships at 10 a.m. today at SUNY Stony Brook.

Sachem's Carvalheira (105), Centereach's Keith Matias (112) and Longwood's John Lange (145) won two matches apiece to advance.

Longwood, with 90½ points and seven semifinalists, leads defending champion Sachem's 77½ points and six semifinalists for the team title. A record 30 teams will be represented in the semifinals.

Among those is Mount Sinai with Bill Morgan (126), who is trying to become that school's first county champion.

Half Hollow Hills East qualified 11 wrestlers into the tournament, more than any other school, and advanced three into the semifinals.

Another Hills East wrestler, Darren Pascarella (119), nearly upset top-seeded Liston Brown of Copiague before dropping a 4-3 decision.

"It's too bad they met so early," Hills East coach Joe Pennacchio said.

That seemed to be the feeling everywhere.

Said Copiague's Richardson. "I watched six guys go up to the podium and stand there and accept awards last year. And I beat four of them, two by pin. But Carvalheira knocked me out in the first round. But I got over it, worked hard and made it back here. I got another horrible draw and I'm done after one match. I got the short end of the stick two years in a row."

Richardson may have been the second-best wrestler at his weight two years in a row, but never got the chance to prove it.