

# Three-day wrestling tournament

Coaches and wrestlers from Section 4 have hinted about boycotting the Federation portion of the state wrestling meet, scheduled for Sunday, if they win a public school title on Saturday.

Who could blame them?

In what may be the most unpopular decision since prohibition, the powers that be in New York state turned a perfectly good tournament into something that has outraged most people involved with the sport.

After a grueling two-day New York State Public High School Athletic Association meet Friday and Saturday at Syracuse's Onondaga County War Memorial, winners will be asked to wrestle Sunday at Fowler High in the Federation Meet against the champions from the Catholic High School Athletic Association and New York City's Public School Athletic League.

For the past 14 years, the CHSAA and PSAL wrestled as a section in the NYSPHSAA tournament.

History shows the new format to be a farce.

Since 1981, the CHSAA and PSAL have combined for one state champion and 36 place-winners. Over the same span, Broome County wrestlers have won 10 state titles with 58 place-winners. Section 4 has had 24 state champs and 127 top-six finishers.

So to force the public school champions to make weight three times in one weekend and wrestle up to six matches against top-flight competition puts athletes at risk of injuries and satisfies no one.

Dylan Urban, Union-Endicott's 119-pounder, said he'll take a wait-and-see attitude toward Sunday.

"If I get there, I'll see what my Section 4 teammates are going to do," Urban said. "If they go ahead and wrestle then I probably will, too."

Urban said if he does plan on wrestling Sunday, it would affect his routine for Friday and Saturday.

The last time wrestlers have to weigh-in is after Friday night's matches for the NYSPHSAA. After they make weight, they usually have big meal to load up for Saturday.

But Urban said he'd have to watch what he eats Friday if he plans to make weight on Sunday.

Norwich coach Don Kovalchik said he'd advise wrestlers to not attend Federation Meet.

"I'm very much against what the powers that be decided," said Kovalchik, who will coach Section 4's 145-pound champion Aaron Whaley. "It's unfair to the wrestlers."

Kovalchik added that if a wrestler wanted to wrestle Sunday and his parents approved, he would allow him to do so.

## is too much of a stretch

## Wrestlers face dilemma if they win Saturday night —

On Tuesday, when most of the Section 4 champions and their coaches met at Chenango Forks for a workout, the coaches were asked the wrestlers may boycott Sunday's matches.

Vestal coach Tony Policare said, "I think that's safe."

Another look at the numbers shows that about 25 schools in the CHSAA and PSAL have wrestling compared to 568 in the NYSPHSAA, but the public schools make up just one-third of the Federation.

"It's kind of like winning the Super Bowl and then playing the Arena Bowl champion," Policare said.

The big question in all of this is why.

In the Feb. 5 issue of the New York State Sportswriters Association Newsletter, an article in the letter quoted Walter Eaton, the assistant director of the NYSPHSAA as saying:

"People are fearful we are fixing something that isn't broke. (We) feel we are serving our member schools correctly by allowing them to determine a champion among themselves first."

One has to wonder if that's the real motivation.

In 1993, the NYSPHSAA voted to exclude the PSAL and CHSAA from all state championships—a decision that didn't set well with the Catholic and New York City schools.

So to appease the PSAL and CHSAA, Federation championships — which already existed in basketball and cross-country — started popping up.

With that in mind, a vote in January 1993 by the NYSPHSAA voted on the wrestling format to be used this year.

The 11 sections that make up the NYSPHSAA each had four representatives at the meeting. One boys coach, a girls coach, a principal and a superintendent.

Obviously, not many wrestling coaches were on hand.

There are two major differences with wrestling than other sports that have Federation championships.

First, the reason why NYSPHSAA wanted to exclude the New York City and Catholic schools from its championships was because their athletes dominated the track and basketball competition. The city and Catholic schools annually turn out the best teams and athletes in those sports. That is not the case in wrestling.

Second, Federation championships in other sports occur a week after the NYSPHSAA championships, allowing athletes time to regroup.

The fact wrestlers are not being allowed a week to recover is especially mind-boggling, because the wrestling season ends early enough to allow another week of competition. The basketball season continues until the end of March.

What this sport needs is a solution and Kovalchik has one of the best.

He proposes to take the champions of class meets in A, B, C and D across the state from each section and have them compete for state titles in each classification.

Then the following weekend, take the champions and runners-up in the class meets, along with champs and runners-up from the CHSAA and PSAL for a "Super State" meet.

This format could add more interest to wrestling.

There's no question Kovalchik's proposal would work out better than the fiasco planned for this weekend.



Dylan Urban