

1 Down, 3 to Go for Jantzen

He's first LI freshman to win at states

By Gregg Sarra

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Jesse Jantzen rewrote the history books in state wrestling when he earned a third-place finish in the state tournament as a seventh-grader in 1995. No seventh-grader before him had ever placed in the state tournament.

Then he captured his second Suffolk County title and earned another third-place finish at the states last year. No wrestler has placed in the state tournament five times, but Jantzen now had two.

Now Jantzen, who wrestles for Shoreham-Wading River, has added another chapter to his brilliant story. Using an aggressive style, Jantzen dictated the course of his 119-pound state final and came away with a thrilling, 3-2, overtime victory over Cooperstown's Packy Burke for the 119-pound championship late Saturday night at the Onondaga War Memorial in Syracuse.

The win made Jantzen the first freshman from Long Island to win a state title. It is also the first step in an attempt to become the first-ever, four-time state champion.

"He certainly has the super conditioning and focus to pull it off," Shoreham-Wading River coach Paul Jendrewski said. "And we'll know in three years if the ultimate prize will be his alone — four state titles. If anyone can do it, Jesse can."

Jantzen (37-0) gained a takedown at 38 seconds of the first period for a 2-0 lead before being reversed with 28 seconds left tying the score at 2. Jantzen chose neutral in the second period to stay away from the taller Burke's dangerous riding ability. Neither wrestler scored, forcing Jantzen to ride Burke (40-1) the entire third period to send the match to overtime.

"He was huge," Jantzen said. "He had a good inside block so I was looking for the outside shots. I just pushed the action and stayed under control."

Jantzen tried six consecutive take-downs in overtime as Burke repeatedly backed up. Burke was finally hit with a long overdue stall violation, which cost him the decisive point.

The win improved Jantzen to 97-3.

"I'm really happy for him because so many kids come here and place third, fourth, fifth and never win it," said Shoreham coach Don Jantzen, Jesse's father. "The intensity is forever changing and winning the first one really eliminates the pressure."

Pressure is something Baldwin senior Kevin Shippas put on himself all season. Since his overtime loss in last year's 250-pound state final in 1996, Shippas has been on a mission.

That mission concluded with a perfect 36-0 season and a powerful 15-6 win over Kris Eglin of Shaker for the 220-pound state title. Dean Dergarabedian was the last Baldwin wrestler to win a state title in 1977 when he captured the 132-pound class over Dan Sorenson of Oneonta.

"I thought about this title for a year," Shippas said. "I underachieved last year. This is a great way to end my high school wrestling career."

Long Beach senior Kevin Haggerty also put an exclamation point on his career. Haggerty put on a takedown clinic throughout the tournament and came away with an 8-5 win over Duane Thomas of Maine-Endwell for the 160-pound title.

Haggerty (36-0) gained a quick double leg takedown with 1:06 left in the first period and recorded two second-period takedowns to build a 6-2 lead. He countered Thomas' advance with a bear hug and hit his fourth takedown for an 8-5 win.

"He never wanted the spotlight and was real easy to coach," said first-year Long Beach coach Damian Garcia. "The whole coaching staff was responsible for his title. Paul Gillespie, Reggie Jones, Ray Adams, and Leo Palacio all worked with Kevin. he deserved this win."

Haggerty, who placed fourth in last year's tournament, was the first Long Beach state champion since Aldy Teran won the title at 155 pounds in 1993.

At 275, Wyandanch senior Thomas Marrero successfully defended his state title with a 1-0 win over Mike O'Keefe of Brockport. Marrero's second period escape was decisive.

Notes & Quotes: The Suffolk sectional team placed (finishing second through sixth) 11 of 15 wrestlers in the tournament. Senior Carlos Restrepo of Brentwood, voted the most outstanding wrestler in the Suffolk County tournament, had the misfortune of facing eventual state champion Phillip Mansueto of Middletown in the first round of the 103-pound class. Restrepo battled Mansueto into the third period and trailed by a point before he was pinned in 5:47. Instead of giving up, Restrepo won four straight wrestling matches to finish third.

"There is nothing more impressive than a kid who comes up here, loses early in the tournament and fights his way back to a place finish," said Longwood coach Scott Detore, who wrestled back for a third-place finish for Hauppauge in 1983. "It shows heart and determination. We had a lot of kids battle back."

Junior John Case of Hampton Bays took third at 112 and Mt. Sinai junior Joe Morbillo placed third at 135. Riverhead senior Willie Welsh had four wins and took fourth at 220. He dropped two overtime decisions in the tournament.

Suffolk scored 172 points to place third in the team scoring behind Syracuse (III) 238½ and Binghamton (IV) 190. Nassau was eighth with 115 points. . . . Eight wrestlers returned to the state tournament having won a state title last year. Only four were able to win a second crown.

Chad Caros of Suffern, who won the title at 126 pounds while wrestling for Franklinville High School in Buffalo last year, captured the 130-pound crown with an 11-2 win over Brice Kelley of Camden. Paul Paquin of Cornwall won the 112-pound title last year and came back to take the 125-pound class with a convincing 16-6 win over Greene's Jake Lemberg.

The Mansueto brothers, Rocco (96) and Phillip (103) of Middletown were the second set of brothers to win state titles in the same year. Carl and Al DeStefanis of Locust Valley won the 98- and 105-pound titles, respectively, in 1979. The only difference — the Mansuetos are twins.