

Vaccaro, Flynn Reach Finals

By Gregg Sarra

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Syracuse — There is an air of confidence about East Islip's Rob Vaccaro and Huntington's Pat Flynn. The two were roommates at Jay Robinson's extreme wrestling camp for the past three summers in Minnesota. And they agree that if they had an edge in the state wrestling championships, it stemmed from the intense camp workouts they endured for 28 days each of those summers.

"There are five different workouts each day and it can be grueling," said Vaccaro, who was looking for his second state title late last night at 103 pounds at the Onondaga County War Memorial. "We had weight training, practice on techniques and we went over the mental attitude and approach to what we do."

Vaccaro pinned Chris Cartwright of Newburgh Free Academy (Section IX) in 2:46 in yesterday's 103-pound semifinal. He was perpetual motion throughout the first period, building a seven-point lead before putting away Cartwright to improve his record to 35-0.

"I put a lot of time into this sport," Vaccaro said. "I'm sure a lot more than most of my competitors."

Vaccaro met St. Anthony's Keith Eckert, a 9-2 winner over Fulton's Josh LaVea in the semis, in an All-Long Island title bout. Eckert (30-5) knocked state runner-up Walt Sosnowski of Massapequa into the wrestlebacks in the opening round.

Flynn met previously unbeaten Nate Mumbulo of Oxford (IV) in a wild semifinal. Mumbulo looked as if he had Flynn cradled in the second period before the Huntington junior popped his head out and threw the unsuspecting Mumbulo to his back for a pin in 2:24.

"Some moves may look dangerous to the fans, but I know where I'm at with my body weight and balance," Flynn said. "He never had me. If I'm not comfortable in a situation, then I'm out of there."

Flynn met Mike Mormile of Monroe-Woodbury (IX) in a rematch of last year's 103-pound final. Flynn won last year's meeting, 10-6.

For the first time in state history, a Catholic school sent two wrestlers into the finals, as defending state champion Lucas Magnani of St. Anthony's joined Eckert. Magnani earned a thrilling 9-7 overtime win over Sachem's John Manarte. Magnani led 7-3 into the final 10 seconds of regulation before Manarte hit a four-point move to force the extra session.

Magnani wasn't the only Long Islander to survive a close call in the semifinal round. Dan Roberts of Bellport fought off his back in the first period to erase a 5-1 deficit and pull out a 12-6 win over Chris Hand of Whitney Point (IV) at 130 pounds.

"He's just too strong to keep down," Bellport coach Rick Herrmann said. "And he found his way out of there."

They don't just play basketball in Amityville. Just ask Uthman Jackson. He marched into the 140-pound final against Hicksville's Mike Williams by winning a wild semifinal, 3-2, over Matt Homenick of Pearl River (Section I). Jackson bear-hugged Homenick to the mat for a two-point takedown with 22 seconds left for the victory.

Suffolk coaches have long been in favor of sending two wrestlers in each weight class to the state tournament. They believe the depth in Suffolk allows for that kind of competitiveness.

The Williams-Jackson final and Magnani-Manarte semifinal support the theory. Williams wrestled at Floyd last year before transferring to Hicksville and Magnani transferred to St. Anthony's from Islip.