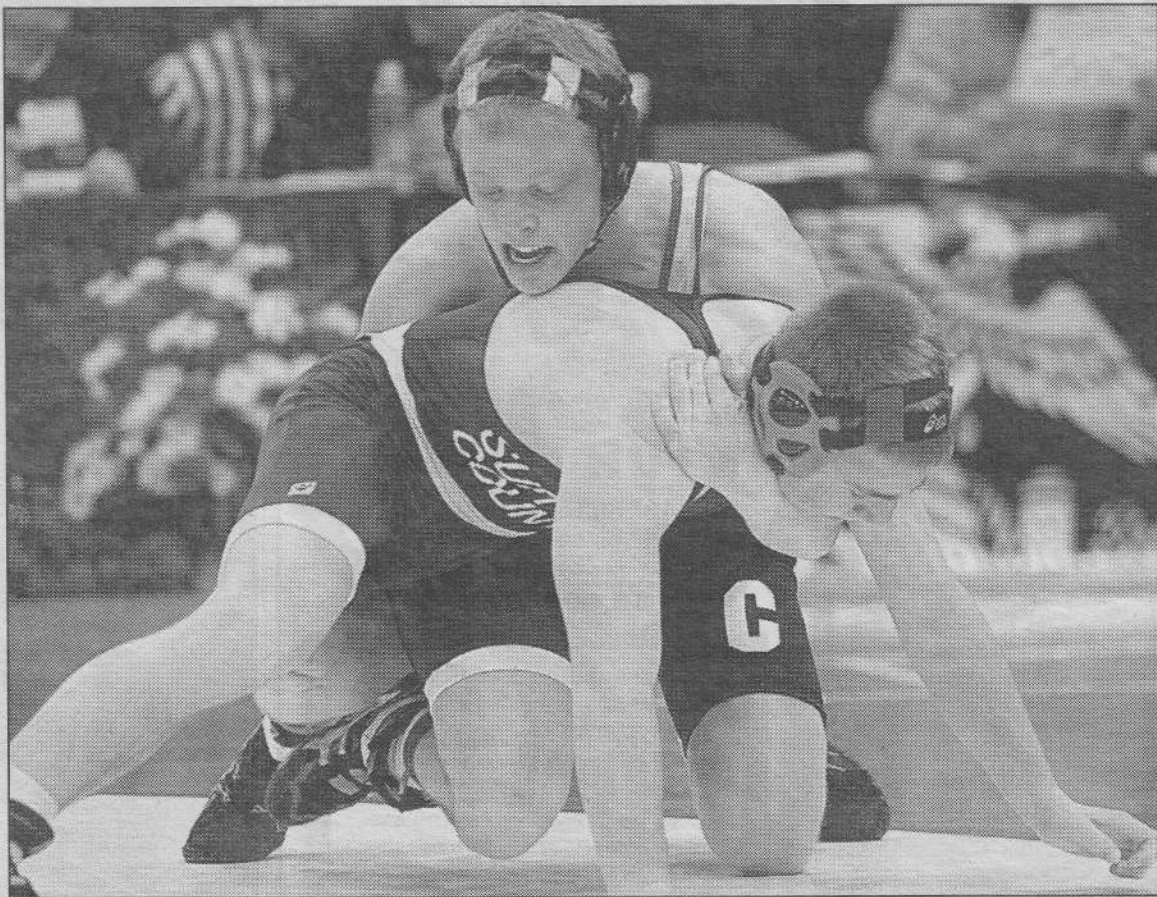


Magnani Makes Point, Again



AP Photo for Newsday

St. Anthony's Lucas Magnani, top, grapples with East Islip's Rob Vaccaro in a 119-pound semifinal

Twists and Turns

Gregg Sarra breaks down the semifinal matchup between Lucas Magnani of St. Anthony's and Rob Vaccaro of East Islip:

First Period — On the opening whistle, Magnani went for the legs of the two-time state champion and gained a single-leg takedown and a 2-0 lead at the 14-second mark. The stronger Magnani rode Vaccaro for the remaining 1:46 of the period.

Magnani led, 2-0

Second Period — Magnani, on bottom, scored on an uncontested escape to make it 3-0. Vaccaro hit a dump for two points to cut the deficit to 3-2. Magnani escaped for a 4-2 lead and immediately scored on another single-leg

takedown for a 6-2 advantage. Vaccaro worked his way loose for a point.

Magnani led, 6-3

Third Period — Vaccaro escaped to get within 6-4 and started to push the action. The two flurried for more than a minute with no points scored. Vaccaro hit another two-point dump to tie the score at 6 with 27 seconds left. He elected to use the optional start and let Magnani loose. The escape made it 7-6. Vaccaro furiously attacked Magnani's legs and got deep on a single-leg takedown as the clock wound down. The buzzer sounded with no points awarded.

Final score: Magnani 7, Vaccaro 6

Gains 119-pound final after edging Vaccaro for third straight time

By Gregg Sarra

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Syracuse — This matchup arrived with a history.

Two-time state champion Rob Vaccaro of East Islip had never beaten Lucas Magnani of St. Anthony's. They'd met twice over the past two years and Magnani came away with 3-2 victories. Vaccaro earned the state title at 103 pounds last year and bumped up two weights into Magnani's class.

For Vaccaro to become Suffolk's fifth three-time state champion, he needed to solve the talented Magnani, who won a state title in 2000 and finished second last year.

He didn't.

Magnani scored an escape with 27 seconds left and held off Vaccaro for a 7-6 victory to move into the 119-pound final for a rematch against defending state champion J.R. Roberts of Medina (VI).

Vaccaro got in on a deep single-leg takedown in the final nine seconds but couldn't finish the move as time expired. The Magnani-Vaccaro match was the highlight of the semifinal round at the state championships before a sellout crowd of 7,063 at Onondaga County War Memorial.

WRESTLING

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It was the 168th career win for Magnani, tying him with Comsewogue's Adam Mariano for second all time on Long Island.

Shoreham-Wading River's Jesse Jantzen, a four-time state champ, had 221 wins.

Vaccaro, who has a career record of 138-8, was inconsolable. He dropped to his knees and covered his face with his right hand. His quest for a third straight state crown was over, halted by a better wrestler.

"He's a tremendous competitor," Magnani said. "I thought I could have wrestled better. The whole weight class is loaded, just the way I like it."

Magnani earned the right to avenge last year's heartbreaking, 13-9 loss to Roberts in the 119-pound final. A win would have made him the first Catholic schools wrestler to capture two public school championships.

Magnani's little brother, freshman Tom, decided Corey Farnham (Baldwinsville, III), 6-4, at 103 pounds to reach the final. The last brother combination from Long Island to walk away with state titles in the same year was Carl (98) and Al DeStefanis (105) of Locust Valley in 1979.

There were other interesting semifinal matchups that featured Long Island's best. MacArthur's James Strouse hit a takedown in the waning moments of his 140-pound bout with Shoreham-Wading River's Dan Miracola to pull out a 4-3 victory. Huntington's Stephon Sair won his third straight match when he edged MacArthur's Adam Molano, 3-1, at 145 pounds. And Carlos Patrick of Freeport held off John Sforza of Lindenhurst, 3-2, at 160 pounds. Sforza pushed the action throughout the third period but couldn't penetrate Patrick's defense.

Suffolk moved six wrestlers into the finals and led the team scoring with 189 points. Nassau was second with 146 points and dominated in the upper weight classes and with four finalists in the last five weights and totaled five in the final round.