

GC's Laid-Back Donnelly Will Press for Success

By Chris Antonacci
STAFF WRITER

The thin, brown trail of scruff that grew along Dan Donnelly's chin resembled porcupine pricklings.

The Garden City senior scratched the rough surface of his chin — yet maintained his pace as he sprinted through Division's hallways during his pre-practice warm-up Feb. 28. Donnelly ran undeterred despite his discomfort even though he — and his electric razor — lacked energy to remove the irritating

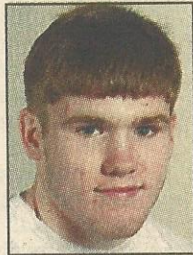
hair from his face.

Donnelly wore down the razor's batteries, didn't recharge it and felt too sluggish to use a disposable.

It exemplified the casual approach Donnelly maintains throughout his life — whether preparing for the day or a wrestling match. Donnelly, after all, left Chaminade following his freshman year — after he received detentions for sporting a loose tie and not wearing a belt.

It is because of his persona that Donnelly since has developed a defensive wrestling approach that might not result in high-scoring bouts, but has made him a winner.

The 5-9, 145-pounder escaped 14 seconds into the second period and then rode out South Side's Eric Roehrig in the third en route to a 1-0 victory at the Nassau championships Feb. 23.



Dan Donnelly

Donnelly (30-3) will feature a "more aggressive" technique when he wrestles at the state championships that begin at 1 p.m. tomorrow at the Onondaga War Memorial in Syracuse.

"I feel confident that I can score when I have to," said Donnelly, the first Garden City wrestler to win a Nassau title since Lyle Johnson (148 pounds) in 1965. "When a lot of people see my scores, they wonder 'What's wrong?' I just have a laid-back approach. I do what I have to do to win a

match."

Case in point: With his Nassau quarterfinal bout scoreless against Division's Luis Fernandez, Donnelly could see the outcome before the second period. Donnelly told coach Reid Sclafani he would escape in overtime for a 2-1 decision. And then he did it.

"He recognized that he can wrestle an intelligent match," Sclafani said.

Yet it could be a MacArthur wrestler who represents Nassau's best chance for a state champion. Seniors Matt DeLorenzo (30-3 at 112), Adam Molano (35-3, 152) and Gian Villante (35-1, 215) return to the state tournament after placing last year. DeLorenzo was fifth, Molano fourth and Villante third.

Plainedge's Jamie Sgaglione (34-3, 119) finished fifth last year. Baldwin's Gabriel Estevez (39-1, 125), the only other returning Nassau champ, lost two bouts to state placemen last year.

East Meadow's Al Tropicano (35-5, 96) and Matt DeLuca (35-1, 160), Long Beach's Stephan Jones (31-3, 135) and Long Beach's Jose Rodriguez (36-6, 140), Valley Stream South's Joe Moran (31-3, 103), Division's Chris Hagmaier

(35-0, 130), Farmingdale's Steve Panarelli (29-1, 171), Massapequa's Mike LaBella (38-1, 189) and Bethpage's Steve Ifasi (25-4, 275) make their first trips upstate.

Nassau finished second behind Suffolk in team scoring last year.

"Each kid is setting their own personal goals, but if each kid performs, it should give us the best results possible," said Section VIII coach Howie Greenblatt of three-time Nassau champ MacArthur.

Chaminade sends four wrestlers — Ian McMenamin (28-6, 96), Derick Russ (28-6, 103), Chris Memoli (30-6, 125) and Neil Franciotti (24-3, 152) — who all won their weight classes in leading Chaminade to the team title at the CHSAA state wrestling championships. Franciotti went 0-2 last year.

Holy Trinity's Rich Crifasi (24-3, 171) and Kellenberg's Maurice Baker (20-7, 189) are the lone qualifiers from their schools.

Rich Gage (24-3, 119) and Joe Drennan (28-2, 140), who went 1-2 at the tournament last year, will represent the CHSAA from St. Anthony's.