

Oschmann moves into final

■ Hauppauge soph is 1 victory from state crown at 96 pounds

BY GREGG SARRA
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

ALBANY — John Oschmann called it nervous energy. The chiseled Hauppauge sophomore rode an exercise bike in the bowels of Pepsi Arena yesterday in between wrestling sessions at the 43rd state wrestling championships.

STATE DIVISION I CHAMPIONSHIPS

Earlier, Oschmann used a vicious headlock to throw highly regarded Johnson City (IV) freshman Peter Capone onto his back and open a 5-0 lead on his way to a 13-5 semifinal win in front of a crowd of 6,000. Two third-period takedowns and unyielding pressure kept Capone on his heels. Oschmann, who moved into the 96-pound championship against MacArthur's Mike Daly late last night, is aiming to become Hauppauge's first state champ since two-time winner Michael Messina in 1998-99.

"He didn't place as a freshman in the county tournament and he made a decision to totally dedicate himself to the sport," Hauppauge coach Chris Messina said of Oschmann. "And this is the result. He's undefeated, he's developed a phenomenal work ethic and he's gained so much experience during the offseason that he's tough to beat."

Oschmann (34-0) stormed through the Suffolk tournament and pounded his way into the state final by overpowering his opponents and using his quickness. After the bike ride, he jogged around the corridors.

"I realized how much more I needed to train to get to this level," he said. "I'm stronger than most of my opponents. I use the bowflex all the time and I run and drill non-stop. There is no down time."

Oschmann traveled to Oklahoma, Virginia and North Dakota to gain valuable experience.

The shortest route traveled may have helped him the most.

"Meeting the Duttons was the greatest thing that could have happened to me to get to the next level," Oschmann said of his Hauppauge family friends. "I work out at their place all the time. And now I need one more win."

He was one of eight Suffolk wrestlers to advance to the title round. Islip's Tom Magnani (119), Chris Wade (140) and Ryan Patrovich (152) joined West Babylon's Alton Lucas, the defending state champion

at 160, Floyd's John Barone (171), Huntington's Jack Sullivan (189) and Sachem North's Matt Ferber (215) in the finals.

"We had one of the best semifinal rounds of all time," said Islip coach Joe Patrovich, who also heads the sectional team. "All eight wrestlers won in the semifinals and everyone in the wrestle-back rounds came back for a place finish. It's just an outstanding performance for the Suffolk team."

Magnani became the sixth wrestler to reach the finals four times. He will meet Kevin

Smith of Mexico (III) in an attempt to capture his first title.

"There is nothing stopping me from winning the title," Magnani said. "It's my last chance and it's all self-explanatory. I will win."

Magnani lost three straight years to four-time champion Troy Nickerson of Chenango Forks (IV). Nickerson was in the 125-pound final looking to become the first five-time champ.

Daly was the only Nassau wrestler to reach the finals as the sectional team took 10th place. Long Beach sophomore P.J.

Gillespie lost a controversial 5-4 semifinal decision to Austin Meys of Shenendehowa (II).

Notes & quotes: Longtime Long Beach coach Paul Gillespie was inducted into the state wrestling hall of fame. He received a warm ovation, and when asked about his son's difficult loss said: "We know these things can happen in sports. It's very tough to swallow but the mark of a champion is how you come back from something like that." P.J. won two wrestle-back bouts for a third-place finish.