

Thompson Made The Right Choice

By Gregg Sarra
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Syracuse — Longwood wrestler Duane Thompson almost made a big mistake in ninth grade. The 138-pounder almost played basketball.

"Coach [Mike Picozzi] steered me in the right direction and told me of the potential he thought I had," Thompson said. "And I'm glad I took his advice because wrestling will put me through college."

With two victories, Thompson moved into the semifinal round of the state wrestling championships last night at the Onondaga War Memorial.

Picozzi recalled how Thompson tried to maneuver his way through the halls and avoid telling his coach of his desire to play basketball.

"I cornered him one morning and we talked about loyalty and all the things we did together in his early development," Picozzi said. "He started crying in the school hallway and said he was only kidding."

Kidding or not, Thompson is no joke. The senior raised his record to 24-0 and leads 10 Suffolk wrestlers into the semifinal round. Suffolk leads team standings with 85½ points. Albany-Schenectady, which qualified eight semifinalists, is second with 80½ points. Suffolk last won the team title in 1989.

"The team race is very tight," Suffolk coach Jack Mahoney said. "We had some real nice performances and we hope to have continued success."

The Nassau team scored 50½ points and moved six wrestlers into the semis, led by last year's state runner-up, James Douglas (105) of Bethpage. Undefeated MacArthur wrestlers Rob Paletta (112, 29-0) and Joe Bongiorno (heavyweight, 22-0) moved into the semis, and Herricks' Louis DiMaria (126) won his 100th career match with an 8-4 decision over Kevin Bulling (East Rochester, Section V).

West Islip 250-pounder Jason Cohen routed Bethpage's Ron Cercy, 14-2, and turned in a second-period pin over Peru's Chuck Robinson.

Rocky Point teammates Chad Henkin (132) and sophomore Rob Wylie (167)

made the semis. Henkin won twice to increase his career total to 120, and Wylie decisioned national powerlifting champion Sirrell Gissendanner of Spencerport, 6-4.

The 105-pound class, with three returning state place-winners, is the tournament's most competitive. However, Centereach's Keith Matias (105) and Douglas both made it through to the semis. Dave Hardwick of Valley Central, the tournament's only returning state champion, was beaten by Spencerport's Joe Barbera, 6-3, and Matias put Barbera into the wrestlebacks with an 8-2 decision.

"I must be on a roll," Matias said. "I'm using moves that I haven't used in years." His cutback two-point takedown turned out to be the most critical in his win over Barbera.

Sachem's Jason Kraft (155) seemed to be in perpetual motion in his matches. The senior scored seven takedowns in his first match, a 19-8 win, and added four more in a 10-2 quarterfinal win.

"He was raring to go last night at practice," West Islip coach Tony Mellino said. "He was grabbing people and working on moves until we left. He's ready."

STATE WRESTLING CHAMPIONSHIPS At Syracuse

Semifinal Pairings: 91 — James Hieronymous (Freeport) vs. Jason Goldman (Maine-Endwell, IV); Mark Yanagihara (Ballston Spa, II) vs. Brian Fischerich (Huntington), 98 — Frank Nocito (Harrison, I) vs. Gary Wolf (Beaver River, III); Joel Griffith (Niagara-Wheatfield, VI) vs. John Carnevalera (Sachem), 105 — Eric Amato (John Jay East Fishkill, I) vs. Keith Matias (Centereach); Jim Douglas (Bethpage) vs. Chris Stevens (Fredonia, VI), 112 — Anthony DeMaio (Edgemont, I) vs. Ted Secoolish (Johnson City, IV); Alex Croog (Brighton, V) vs. Rob Paletta (MacArthur), 119 — Mike Kohl (Fairport, V) vs. Ron Vosburg (Elmira Free Academy, IV); Rob Bashaw (Peru, VII) vs. Jake Gardner (Hoosick Falls, II), 126 — Louis DiMaria (Herricks) vs. Jacob Schaus (Falconer, VI); John DeMoors (Baldwinsville, III) vs. Shawn Farley (Susquehanna Valley, IV), 132 — Phil Donnelly (Pearl River, I) vs. John Morello (Lockport, VI); Chad Henkin (Rocky Point) vs. Bill Hayden (Fulton, III), 138 — Duane Thompson (Longwood) vs. Mike Holland (Long Beach); Aaron Cook (Indian River, III) vs. Shawn Nautel (Niskayuna, II), 145 — Brian Lawton (South Jefferson, III) vs. John Lange (Longwood); Matt Manico (Colonie, I) vs. Keith Smith (Johnson City, IV), 155 — Mitch Clark (Canton, X) vs. Chad MacNaughton (Glens Falls); Jason Kraft (Sachem) vs. Shayne Bogardus (Fulton, III), 167 — Matt Kitts (Fulton, III) vs. Eric Gross (Medina, VI); Mike Quaglio (John Jay East Fishkill, I) vs. Rob Wylie (Rocky Point), 177 — Kerry McCoy (Longwood) vs. Chuck Perry (So. Glens Falls, II); Ryan Hamersmith (Clarence, VI) vs. Gino Brown (Newburgh Free Academy, IV); Joe Bongiorno (MacArthur) vs. Jamie Huntington (Whitehall, II); Jason Gleasman (Adirondack) vs. Casey Lamb (Victor, V), 250 — Lou Volpe (Cornwall, IX) vs. Jason Spector (Queensbury, II); Travis Kidder (Mexico, III) vs. Jason Cohen (West Islip, XI). Team Scores — Suffolk 85½, Albany-Schenectady II 80½, Syracuse III 79, Buffalo VI 58, Westchester I 51, Binghamton IV 50½, Nassau 50½, Rochester V 39½, Catskills IX 28, Plattsburgh-Champlain VII 17, St. Lawrence X 11, PSAL 9, CHSAA 2.