

Saturday night provided some of the greatest fireworks the State Tournament has ever seen. The team race in Division 1 was one of the tightest ever. Both Wadsworth and St. Edward put 6 wrestlers in the finals - and both crowned 4 champions. In the end, Wadsworth came out on top by 4 ½ points, but not before some heart-stopping moments and numerous lead changes.

There were two head to head matchups in the finals - and Wadsworth won them both. At 135 lbs, Loudon Gordon (Wadsworth) won in dramatic fashion, throwing and then pinning Mark Martin (St. Eds), with 1 second to go on the clock. This was a very close match - the pin caused the Schott to erupt. This win became significant late in the round. The second head to head also went to Wadsworth, when Brad Squire defeated Anthony Salupo, putting Wadsworth back in the lead. However, two weight classes later, St. Edward regained the lead when Nick Sulzer won at 160. Now, all Eds could do was wait and watch.

Wadsworth had finalists in the 3 final weight classes - three shots at putting St. Edward away for good. The first, at 189, featured Caleb Busson against Centerville's Nick Miller, in an epic battle of unbeaten's. When Busson took a 3-1 lead, the Wadsworth crowd again erupted. However, Busson was not able to hold the lead, and the drama continued.

At 215, Nick Tavanello faced another Centerville athlete, Kyle Rose. Another very close match ensued. Tavanello was able to secure the winning takedown with less than 20 seconds left, and the celebration was on.

An interesting sidenote: Back at 135, when Loudon Gordon pinned his opponent, the fall gave Wadsworth 2 extra team points. Those team points loomed large down the stretch - if he hadn't won by fall, Wadsworth would have still been trailing after the 215 match, leaving it up to Ben Buzzelli, who was facing an opponent that beat him in district finals the previous week. Instead, by the time Buzzelli hit the mat, Wadsworth had clinched the title - by a mere ½ point. As it turned out, Buzzelli won in multiple overtimes. What a finish that would have been, had they not already secured the title!

I looked up at the crowd during the 215 match. The arena was still full. Nobody was going to miss out on seeing who won the D1 title - great excitement.

In Division 2, Graham won handily, racking up over 200 points and crowning 6 champions. In Division 3, the Monroeville 4 finally got their title, cruising to a 40 point victory.

Special Note: in Division 3, 152 lber Kurtis Jefferis (Barnesville), dropped an 8-1 decision to defending state champ Jake Howe. While Kurtis came up short, his runner-up finish is a major victory for him and Barnesville especially considering that he nearly lost his life in a horrific ATV accident about 8 months ago.

-Randy Simpson