

Hatter wrestlers defend their turf at Ryan Sabbagh Holiday Tournament

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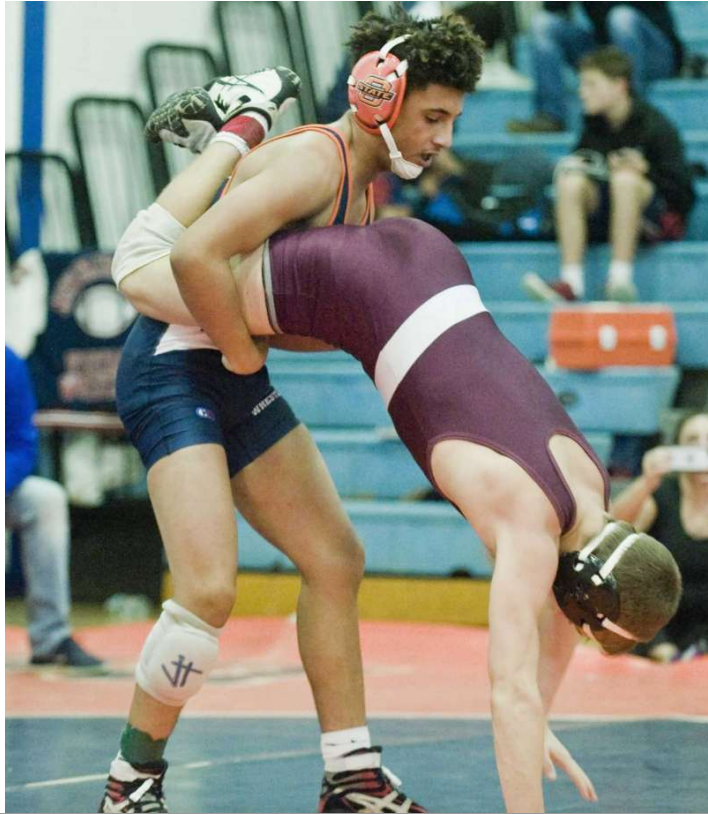


IMAGE 1 OF 11

Danbury High School's Javon Priar dumps Kings Park High School's Chris Byrne in the 132 lb. class in a wrestling tournament at Danbury. Tuesday, Dec. 27, 2016

DANBURY — The **Danbury High School** defended its home turf again Tuesday — and in dominant fashion.

The Hatters scored 3211/2points to win their annual **Ryan Sabbagh Holiday** Tournament for the 24th time in 26 years and the second straight year since Newtown won in 2014. Danbury placed wrestlers in the championship matches in 13 of the 15 weight classes and won seven titles.

Ryan Jack (106 pounds), Ben Leblanc (113), **Jakob Camacho** (120), **Kyle Fields** (126), **Gino Baratta** (160), Andrew Marquis (220) and Mike Gaboardi (285) all won titles for the Hatters, while Kevin Pina (99), Javon Priar (132), **Sean Williams** (138), **Peterson Souza** (145), **A.J. Kovacs** (152) and **Jake Constantine** (182) all took home runner-up honors.

"It's nice to come out here in our hometown and start our season with a stamp and just let everyone know that we're here, and at anytime, we're ready to go," said Camacho, who won the tournament's Most Outstanding Wrestler award.

Danbury had such a big day that its "B" team placed sixth in the team scoring out of 21 teams and even put two kids in the finals, with **Tyler Johnson** (106) and Solomine James (220) both placing second.

"It was a good day for us," Camacho said. "Everyone came out and wrestled close to their potential. There are definitely some areas of improvement that we need to work on as a team, but that'll all come along with some time. So, we'll get back to practice tomorrow and work on the things we have to work on to perfect them."

Danbury has been ranked first in the state coaches' poll since the preseason, and was a unanimous top pick in this week's poll.

"It does cross our minds sometimes, knowing that there is a target on our backs as a team," Camacho said. "Ultimately, we have a goal in mind, and that's what stays on our mind, and until that goal is achieved, the ranking doesn't really matter. Right now, it's just about improving. If we wrestle to our potential, then that ranking is correct. Until then, it's about working hard and doing what we can do."

Fifth-ranked Bristol Eastern placed second in the team scoring Tuesday with 199 1/2 points, led by champions **Mikey Barrett** (152), **Trinidad Gonzalez** (170) and Zac Marquis (182).

Second-ranked New Milford finished third in the team scoring with 185 points, led by champions **Joanne Ortiz** (99), Tyler Schultz (132) and **C.J. Schultz** (138) and runners-up Brandon Leonard (113), Mel Ortiz (126) and **David Angulo** (195).

Shook knows the Hatters haven't seen the best – or the last – of New Milford. The two teams will almost certainly be among the top contenders for the State Open crown come late February.

"Rankings don't mean a lot to me, especially the early ones," Shook said. "New Milford is going to be right with us at the end. They took third today, but they were missing a few guys. Bristol Eastern is a good team, but we'll see."

Joanne Ortiz became only the second female wrestler to win a title at the Sabbagh Holiday Tournament. The first was Danbury's **Victoria Goncalves** two years ago – the same season she won the 99-pound FCIAC title.

"Wow. Just wow," Ortiz said with a huge smile as she began to realize the magnitude of winning her first varsity championship. "Just knowing that my fighting and winning can motivate other little girls to continue, it does make a difference."

And while Danbury's team title was all but locked up before the finals even started, several of the championship matches were anything but anticlimactic. In the 113-pound final, Leblanc trailed 4-2 with 20 seconds remaining, then scored a two-point reversal and two back points for a 6-4 win. Fields won a back-and-forth battle in the 126-pound final with a 3-2 decision. Baratta won the 160-pound final with a pin in the second overtime.

"Ben Leblanc and Kyle Fields both wrestled well against quality opponents," Shook said. "We weren't ranked at both those weights in the state, and both their opponents were. It was a good overall tournament."

Also winning titles Tuesday were Avery Shay (145) for ninth-place New Fairfield, and **Sam Schuyler** (195) for fourth-place Kings Park, from Long Island, N.Y.

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at Danbury High School

Team scores: 1. Danbury 321.5; 2. Bristol Eastern 199.5; 3. New Milford 185; 4. Kings Park (N.Y.) 132.5; 5. **Daniel Hand** 118; 6. Danbury B 106; 7. Greenwich 96.5; 8. East Haven 76; 9. New Fairfield 67; 10t. New Canaan 60; 10t. Barlow/Immaculate 60; 12. Stamford 54; 13. Bethel 50; 14. Norwalk 44; 15. Morgan 40; 16. Portland 37; 17. **Bacon Academy** 25; 18. Notre Dame-Fairfield 22; 19. Kennedy Catholic (N.Y.) 13; 20. Kings Park B (N.Y.) 8; 21. East Hampton 4.

99: Championship: Joanne Ortiz (New Milford) pinned Kevin Pina (Danbury) 5:10. Consolation: **Brendan Leung** (Stamford) pinned **Mitchell Leblanc** (East Hampton) 2:11. Fifth: Sam Espinal (Danbury B) def. Will Fox (Greenwich) by default.

106: Championship: Ryan Jack (Danbury) pinned Tyler Johnson (Danbury B) 1:04. Consolation: **Bryce Beebe** (Bristol Eastern) def. **Victor Garcia** (East Haven) by default. Fifth: **Kyle Davern** (Daniel Hand) pinned Nick Khzouz (New Canaan) 3:01.

113: Championship: Ben Leblanc (Danbury) dec. Brandon Leonard (New Milford) 6-4. Consolation: Sam White (Norwalk) def. Mike Savello (Kings Park) by default. Fifth: Jordon Champagne (Bristol Eastern) pinned **Mitchell Grimes** (Greenwich) 2:17.

120: Championship: Jakob Camacho (Danbury) major dec. Rich Gomez (Kings Park) 18-8. Consolation: Mark Hartman (Daniel Hand) pinned **Carson Sassu** (Bristol Eastern) 0:53. Fifth: **Dylan Ehret** (Greenwich) vs. Nic Savo (Danbury B), double default.

126: Championship: Kyle Fields (Danbury) dec. Mel Ortiz (New Milford) 3-2. Consolation: Tyler Sung (New Canaan) def. Eric Fennes (Kings Park) by default. Fifth: Alex Tapia (East Haven) def. **Jose Najarro** (Stamford) by default.

132: Championship: Tyler Schultz (New Milford) dec. Javon Priar (Danbury) 5-3. Consolation: Jack Kachidurian (Bristol Eastern) pinned **Chris Byrne** (Kings Park) 4:42. Fifth: Ozzie Cortez (Danbury B) vs. Jason Vitrit (New Fairfield), double default.

138: Championship: C.J. Schultz (New Milford) major dec. Sean Williams (Danbury) 9-0. Consolation: Connor Gontarz (East Haven) dec. Noah Piazza (Bristol Eastern) 8-6. Fifth: Nick Frayter (Greenwich) def. Gab Ortiz (Barlow/Immaculate) by default.

145: Championship: Avery Shay (New Fairfield) pinned Peterson Souza (Danbury) 1:47. Consolation: **Anthony Lozier** (Bristol Eastern) def. Julius Page (Stamford). Fifth: **Anthony Cimino** (Morgan) dec. Ryan Paist 4-3.

152: Championship: Mikey Barrett (Kings Park) dec. A.J. Kovacs (Danbury) 2-1. Consolation: **Andrew Sayers** (Bethel) pinned **Max Schwartz** (Norwalk) 2:53. Fifth: Zak Santoemma (Daniel Hand) def. **Ben Coppock** (Barlow/Immaculate).

160: Championship: Gino Baratta (Danbury) pinned J.C. Baroems (Kings Park) 7:29. Consolation: Mike Ceci (Greenwich) dec. Cam Berger (New Milford) 5-4. Fifth: **Mike Wassink** (Barlow/Immaculate) vs. **Adam Hendrick** (Daniel Hand), double default.

170: Championship: Trinidad Gonzalez (Bristol Eastern) dec. Austin Rambarose (Portland) 2-1. Consolation: Eric Rocha (Danbury) def. Mitch Kuperstein (Daniel Hand) by default. Fifth: **Nico Ziccardi** (Kings Park) def. Nick Garoffolo (Barlow/Immaculate) by default.

182: Championship: Zac Marquis (Bristol Eastern) dec. Jake Constantine (Danbury) 7-6. Consolation: Kyle Fabich (New Milford) dec. Andrew Nanai (Greenwich) 8-2. Fifth: Monte Osbey (Danbury B) dec. Marson James (Danbury B) 4-2.

195: Championship: Sam Schuyler (Kings Park) pinned David Angulo (New Milford) 0:47. Consolation: Isaiah Walden (Stamford) def. Alex Nanai (Greenwich) by default. Fifth: Josh Rao (East Haven) def. Ben El-Wardany (Barlow/Immaculate) by default.

220: Championship: Andrew Marquis (Danbury) dec. Solomine James (Danbury B) 1-0. Consolation: **Nick Kortman** (New Canaan) def. Christian Westphal (Daniel Hand) by default. Fifth: Julian Reza (New Milford) def. Peyton Larkin (Greenwich) by default.

285: Championship: Mike Gaboardi (Danbury) major dec. Nick Cote (Bethel) 14-3. Consolation: Mike Burchell (Daniel Hand) def. Dan Geriak (Notre Dame-Fairfield) by default. Fifth: Austin Daley (Morgan) def. Eddie Longest (Kennedy Catholic) by default.

Note: Each wrestler is allowed to compete in five matches in the tournament, which is why there are so many wins by default in the consolation brackets.