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Danbury wrestlers pull away from Warde

By Emery Filmer Published 9:29 pm, Wednesday, December 20, 2017



IMAGE 23 OF 45

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Wrestling action between Fairfield Warde and Danbury in Fairfield, Conn. on Wednesday Dec. 20, 2017.

FAIRFIELD — For a while there Wednesday inside the Fairfield Warde High School gym, some folks, including Warde coach Jason Shaughnessey, were wondering if the great Danbury wrestling dynasty, competing in its season opener, might be slipping a bit.

Warde had just won its third consecutive bout and the score was now tied against a Danbury squad that had won the 2017 FCIAC, Class LL, State Open and New England championships, has won 30 of the last 31 league titles, and hasn't lost a regular-season FCIAC match since 1986.

"At that point, yeah, I was wondering about them," Shaughnessey said. "This early in the season, nobody knows what Danbury has this year."

A short time later, everybody knew. The Hatters won seven straight contests — six by pin — and pulled away for a 51-22 victory over perennial league runner-up Warde.

"Early on it was pretty even," Danbury coach Rick Shook said. "We're a little rusty. We had a few toss-ups and, honestly, we didn't know what we had there."

What the Hatters (1-0) did not have was Jakob Camacho. The All-State senior is sidelined with a knee injury and is expected to return next week. But they had enough to beat a Warde team that is looking for its 13th consecutive FCIAC Eastern Division championship.

The Mustangs (1-1) showed off their strong foursome of Alex Steele, Izaake Zuckerman, Joe Gjinaj and Noah Zuckerman. Steele won by major decision at 138, Izaake Zuckerman decisioned Danbury co-captain Gino Baratta at 170 while Gjinaj (195) and Noah Zuckerman (145) each won by pin.

But, as is usually the case, the Hatters just had too much.

"Danbury is probably No. 1 in New England again," Shaughnessey said. "I guess it's nice to get them early, get them out of the way and build from there."

"Warde is the team we have to beat," Shook added. "Usually we get to see them a few times to get ready but playing them in the first game is still kind of good. Get it out of the way now."

A.J. Kovacs got the Hatters started with a pin at 152 and David Pina did likewise at 160. But then Izaake Zuckerman, freshman John Summers (182) and Gjinaj all won tying the match at 12.

A short time later it was 51-12.

Montez Osbey won a decision at 220 before the Hatters recorded six straight pins. Freshman Jordan Agosto started the run at heavyweight and Liam Knight (106), Tyler Johnson (113),

Ryan Jack (120), Ben LeBlanc (126) and Kyle Fields (132) finished it off before Steel and Noah Zuckerman prevailed for Warde.

WRESTLER OF THE MATCH

While Danbury's Tyler Johnson had the quickest pin (:26), Warde's Izaake Zuckerman survived the feature match of the day, outpointing Gino Baratta 3-1.

QUOTABLE

"I hope we can continue our streak; we have a lot of rookies this year," — Danbury coach Rick Shook, referring to the 20 freshmen and sophomores on the roster.

DEJA-VU ALL OVER AGAIN

Danbury has five All-FCIAC first-teamers from last year back (Tyler Johnson, Ryan Jack, Ben LeBlanc, A.J. Kovacs and Jakob Camacho). Warde, meanwhile returns three first-teamers: Joe Gjinaj, Alex Steele and Izaake Zuckerman.

DANBURY 51, WARDE 22

(at Fairfield Warde): 106: Liam Knight (D) pin Dylan Cruvinal 1:39; **113:** Tyler Johnson (D) pin Reber Shukri :26; **120:** Ryan Jack (D) pin Jonathan Benoit 1:24; **126:** Ben LeBlanc (D) pin Cole Shaughnessey 2:27; **132:** Kyle Fields (D) pin Brandan Moutinho 2:29; **138:** Alex Steele (W) major dec. Johnny Estevez 11-1; **145:** Noah Zuckerman (W) pin Christopher Palacio 2:15; **152:** A.J. Kovacs (D) pin Matthew Sullivan 2:20; **160:** David Pina (D) pin Noah Kane 4:48; **170:** Izaake Zuckerman (W) dec. Gino Baratta 3-1; **182:** John Summers (W) dec. Jesse Patton 5-1; **195:** Joe Gjinaj (W) pin George Esteves 5:10; **220:** Montez Osbey (D) dec. Alec Nardone 3-1; **285:** Jordan Agosto pin Daniel Mundle 2:17. **Records:** Danbury 1-0; Warde 0-1

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