

Class LL Wrestling: Simsbury Freshman Ty Finn Wins At 106

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A lightweight newcomer and a grizzled veteran shared one thing in common Saturday — they were both crowned Class LL wrestling champions.

Simsbury freshman Ty Finn wrestled like a seasoned pro on the way to the 106-pound title Saturday at Trumbull High School. Meanwhile, East Hartford senior Isaiah Jiminian had to go the distance plus to earn the 220 championship — the first of his career.

"It's awesome," said Finn, who improved to 44-3 in his first varsity season.

"It was actually a pretty good win, but I won't lie — I got tired for a minute," said Jiminian. "I just heard the voices of my coaches and my teammates say, 'Don't give up' and it kept pushing me."

The entire day was action packed as wrestlers were thrust through the rounds, starting with the quarterfinals in the morning, to finish before the winter storm arrived in the early evening.

None of it mattered to powerhouse Danbury, which stormed to its 20th title with 274 points behind five first-place finishers. Fairfield Warde (200), Trumbull and Southington (175), and East Hartford (117) rounded out the top five

The top six individual finishers advance to the State Open Friday and Saturday at Floyd Little Athletic Center in New Haven.

Finn opened the finals with a 5-2 victory over Trumbull sophomore Jack Ryan. The Simsbury freshman came in confident, having beaten Ryan 6-2 earlier in the season, and never trailed in the match.

"I watched a lot of video on him, and I prepared for it," said Finn, who was the top seed.

Simsbury coach T.J. Silva said it was no beginners luck — Finn had been preparing for this for years.

"He worked hard all year, and he's been wrestling year-round for the last four, five or six years," Silva said. "This is really his coming out party. ... He's a confident kid. He believes, basically, when he steps on the mat, there is no one better than him, and he's going to go out looking to dominate."

Jiminian, who was also the top seed, entered the championship round having already bettered his fifth-place finish at the divisional meet a year ago. He credited offseason training with KT Kidz, a wrestling association

based on Long Island, along with East Hartford coach Todd Albert for helping him improve.

After trailing 1-0 through two periods, Jiminian tied Danbury's Montez Osbey with an escape in period three. With 14 seconds left in regulation, the match was stopped to clot Jiminian's bloody right nostril, and the wrestlers would carry over their 1-1 tie into overtime.

"[The stoppage] gave me a quick second to think my thoughts through, and I got a second to listen to what my coaches wanted me to do," said Jiminian, who used a takedown in the OT to beat Osbey, 3-1. "Once I knew what my coaches wanted me to do, I put it in my mind, and I just pushed through, got the takedown."

The 138-pound match was a test of strength between Manchester junior Shamar Schand and top-seeded Matt Ryan, from Trumbull. Schand led early 2-0 and 4-3 with takedowns, but Ryan scored five points in the final two minutes to win, 8-7.

"Shamar wrestled great —he had a great tournament," Manchester coach Lou LaGuardia said. "Matt Ryan is a tough opponent. It was a great match, and we fell short by a point at the end."

Glastonbury sophomore Parker Sutton made it to the final at 113 pounds, but came up short to top-seeded Ben Leblanc, from Danbury, 8-3.

It was heartbreak for Southington junior Paul Calo once again. Calo was the top seed at 170 pounds, but lost in four OTs to Danbury's Gino Baratta, 2-1.

"The other kid wrestled real well. We've just got to do better" Southington coach Derek Dion said. "Some of our studs really didn't have a great day today. We have to lick our wounds and see if we can get better for next week."

Calo lost a close match in the final last year at 152 pounds, but came back to win the New England championship two weeks later.

Simsbury senior Jackson King also lost by a point, falling to Trumbull's Joseph Palmieri at 182 by a 4-3 score.

Other winners included, Danbury's Ryan Jack (120), Newtown's Aaron Occhipinti (126), Danbury's Kyle Fields (132) and Al Kovacs (145), Fairfield Warde's Kris Gjinai (152) and Izaake Zuckerman (160), Trumbull's Brett Nutter (195) and Staples' George Harrington (285).

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