

## Danbury wrestlers defend State Open title

By Ryan Lacey Published 9:06 pm, Saturday, February 24, 2018



IMAGE 1 OF 22

Danbury's Ryan Jack wrestles Westhill's Chase Parrot during the finals of the State Open, held Saturday in New Haven.

NEW HAVEN — It was fitting that in a rebuilding year, with very few upperclassmen on the roster but still with the same expectation to produce, the Danbury wrestling team would crown a pair of sophomores as State Open champions Saturday.

Another team championship followed, too, as the Hatters won their second straight championship and fourth in the last six seasons. Ryan Jack (120 pounds) and AJ Kovacs (145) were the individual winners for Danbury, which won comfortably with 145.5 points as six grapplers placed in the top six.

A three-way tie for second followed as Fairfield Warde (95) claimed a share of the silver medal along with Bristol Eastern and Killingly. Southington (94.5) was behind in fifth by just a half a point, while Xavier (90.5) took sixth, Foran (71.5) was eighth, New Milford (70) took ninth and New Canaan (59.5) rounded out the top 10.

"The pressure is off now I guess," Danbury coach Ricky Shook said. "We got it done; we didn't wrestle great, but our finalists and two champions wrestled well all weekend. (Senior) Gino Baratta wrestled well; we had a good year. Class LL and State Open champions, that's what it's all about."

Jack took down Westhill's Chase Parrot, a club teammate and very familiar opponent. Jack also won the State Open as a freshman, keeping hopes alive for a four-championship high school career.

"It feels great, I'm trying to be a four-timer and break my brother's (All-American Kevin Jack, now a senior at N.C. State) record; he won it three times. I worked hard in this tournament; I tend to go out with a game plan every match and know what to do."

Kovacs scored a pin over Zack Burgess of Killingly for the second championship for the Hatters. Baratta took third at 170 for Danbury, while Kyle Fields was fourth at 132. Experience or not, no one would stop the Hatters, who rolled to the FCIAC and Class LL titles.

"The state doesn't know how young they are," Shook said. "They show a lot of poise for their age; most guys winning in this are juniors and seniors. (Jack) works hard, his parents do their job and he's a good listener."

New Milford senior Mel Ortiz took home his first State Open by outlasting Ellis Tech's Sean Johnson — who was the top seed — 3-2 at 126 pounds. Ortiz finished third and second the previous two years.

"I've taken second and third and I didn't want to take second or third again," Ortiz said. "I believed in myself and I achieved it. ... I put all the work in that I needed."

Xavier's Ryan Devivo won his second straight Open title, taking the 170-pound championship with a 6-4 decision over Paul Calo. Devivo had the two-point edge in the final seconds, but Calo almost secured a reversal that would have tied the score.

"You kind of just hope for the best," Devivo said. "You grab and hold as long as you can and just hope he doesn't reverse you. It kind of is what it is ... this means a lot as my last State Open."

Warde produced two champions as Izaake Zuckerman won a narrow 4-3 decision over Michael Angers (Tolland). Zuckerman won his first State Open championship in addition to capturing his Class LL title last weekend.

"I knew I just had to work my positions," Zuckerman said. "Staying in good position; I felt like I was the better wrestler and I just went for it. I wrestled my match smartly and well to get the win; I knew it was a tough opponent."

Teammate Joe Gjinaj then earned a 4-1, double-overtime decision over Bristol Eastern's Trinidad Gonzalez at 195 pounds. Alex Steele finished third at 132 for the Mustangs.

Wilton's Travis Longo pulled off the impressive triple crown as he won the FCIAC, Class LL and finished it off with a State Open at 106, scoring a 4-1 decision over Simsbury's Thomas Finn.

Foran crowned a champion in 152 as Ryan Luth won a 13-8 decision of Granby's Cooper Fleming. At 285, Hand's Michael Burchell pinned Stratford's Sergio Ferreira.

Tolland's Ryan Angers — who defeated New Canaan's Tyler Sung in the 138-pound final — was named the Most Outstanding Wrestler for the tournament.

The top five wrestlers from each weight class advance to next weekend's New England championships, held in Providence, R.I. The Hatters are the defending New England champions.

[rlacey@bcnnew.com](mailto:rlacey@bcnnew.com), [twitter.com/ryanlacey11](https://twitter.com/ryanlacey11)

#### STATE OPEN WRESTLING CHAMPIONSHIPS AT FLOYD LITTLE ATHLETIC CENTER

Team scores: 1. Danbury 149.5; 2. Fairfield Warde 95; 2. Bristol Eastern 95; 2. Killingly 95; 5. Southington 94.5; 6. Xavier 90.5; 7. Fitch 75; 8. Foran 71.5; 9. New Milford 70; 10 New Canaan 59.5; 11. Daniel Hand 53.5; 12. East Hartford 51.5; 13. Toland 51; 14. Montville 44; 14. New London 44; 16. Granby 43; 17. Trumbull 42.5; 18. Simsbury 42; 19. Westhill 41; 20. Platt 38.

106: Travis Longo (Wilton) dec. Thomas Finn (Simsbury) 4-1; 113: Jarod Kosman (Fitch) dec. Alejandro Garcia (Windham) 7-3; 120: Ryan Jack (Danbury) dec. William Parrot (Westhill) 6-2; 126: Mel Ortiz (New Milford) dec. Sean Johnson (Ellis Tech) 3-2; 132: Noah Caskey (Montville) dec. Demetre Carnot (Maloney) 7-2; 138: Ryan Angers (Tolland) dec. Tyler Sung (New Canaan) 7-2; 145: AJ Kovacs (Danbury) pin Zack Burgess (Killingly) 3:52; 152: Ryan Luth (Foran) dec. Cooper Fleming (Granby); 13-8; 160: Izaake Zuckerman (Warde) dec. Michael Angers (Tolland) 4-3; 170: Ryan Devivo (Xavier) dec. Paul Calo (Southington) 6-4; 182: Ben Stratton (Platt) pin Zach Caffrey (Killingly) 1:55; 195: Joe Gjinaj (Warde) dec. Trinidad Gonzalez (Bristol Eastern) 4-1; 220: Dakota Grover (Fitch) pin Isaiah Jiminian (Easter Hartford) 3:14; 285: Michael Burchell (Daniel Hand) pin Sergio Ferreira (Stratford) 4:00.