

Local wrestlers earn All-America honors

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Danbury Ryan Jack (white) wrestles Westhill's Chase Parrott (purple) in the 120 pound match of the FCIAC Boys Wrestling Championship finals at New Canaan High School in New Canaan, Conn. on Saturday, Feb. 10, ... [more](#)

A strong contingent of local high school wrestlers competed in the NHSCA national championships in Virginia Beach this past weekend, and three of them returned home as All-Americans.

New Milford High School senior Mel Ortiz earned All-America honors for the second straight year by placing third in the 126-pound class at the Senior Nationals. He had placed third at 126 last year at the Junior Nationals.

"He's one of the best to ever come out of our school," New Milford coach Chris Piel said. "His accolades speak for themselves. The hard work he has put in the dedication he has made were certainly evident this weekend. To take third at the senior level, he wrestled some extremely good wrestlers this weekend."

Ortiz, who will wrestle for George Mason University next year, had won the New England, State Open, Class L and South-West Conference titles this year.

"It's exciting to see what the next chapter is, because he's not done," Piel said. "Just the fact that he didn't win this thing is just going to make him more hungry. He's just that kind of kid."

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For Danbury, meanwhile, sophomores Ryan Jack and A.J. Kovacs both earned All-America honors for the second straight year. Jack placed third at 120 at the Sophomore Nationals – beating a New York state champion in the consolation finals – and Kovacs placed sixth at 145. Kovacs had placed second and Jack sixth at the Freshman Nationals last year.

“Actually, a lot of my guys did well,” Danbury High wrestling coach Ricky Shook said. “I brought 16, and we wended up with two All-Americans. That’s our goal, to come away with some of those. We got to wrestle a lot of tough matches.”

This year, Jack and Kovacs both won the FCIAC, Class LL and State Open titles in their respective weight classes. Jack won a New England title, and Kovacs placed third.

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