

Danbury captures FCIAC championship for 32nd time in 33 years

Dave Stewart | February 9, 2019



Photo: Scott Mullin / For Hearst Connecticut Media

Danbury's Jordan Agosto works on top of Staples' Jacob Rizy in the 285 lb. class during the FCIAC wrestling championships held at New Canaan High School on Saturday.

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NEW CANAAN — Emotions run the full gamut every season at the Joe Sikorski FCIAC Wrestling Tournament.

From Staples' Jacob Rizy raising his arms to the air after dramatically turning and pinning his opponent for a heavyweight title; to Trumbull's Joseph Palmieri finally defeating a rival on a championship stage; and even to Danbury's Ryan Jack stoically going about his business and claiming a third straight conference title — the FCIAC finals had it all.

While there are always surprises, one consistent has been the Danbury Hatters' dynasty. Danbury scored 257 points to win its 32nd FCIAC championship in 33 seasons this weekend at New Canaan High School. The Hatters also have a nine-year winning streak after finishing as the runners-up to Warde in the 2009-10 season.

With a 55.5-point lead over the Trumbull Eagles heading into the finals, the Hatters already had the team trophy wrapped up, and maintained their advantage through the title bouts to win by 57. Trumbull finished second with an even 200 points, followed by Warde (177), Staples (131) and Brien McMahon (124) in the top five.

"Overall, the whole weekend, we wrestled great," Danbury head coach Ricky Shook said. "Tonight we had our ups and down. I think this is the first time we had everybody place top six, so it was a great team effort. We're coming along. I didn't know how we would do as the year went along but we got better and better and hopefully, with the postseason, we'll be ready to go."

This year's FCIAC tournament featured a smorgasboard of teams represented in the weight class finals. Danbury led that group with eight finalists, followed by Trumbull with five, Warde with four, and host New Canaan with three. In all, nine of the FCIAC's 15 teams had a wrestler finish as either a champ or a runner-up.

Chalk was the word for the finals, as 13 of the 15 bouts featured match-ups of the No. 1 and 2 seeds. All the top seeds reached the finals, and just two No. 3 seeds worked into the mix.



Danbury's Kai Odell defeats Trumbull's Michael Longo 2-0 in OT for the 106-lb championship #ctwr @fciaac

Danbury picked up three weight class titles, with freshman Kai Odell edging Trumbull's Michael Longo 2-0 in overtime at 106 pounds; Jack winning his third straight FCIAC crown with an 8-4 decision against Ridgefield's Ben Smart at 126; and senior Kyle Fields finally winning an elusive conference crown by pinning Westhill's Chase Parrott in 5:03 at 132 pounds.

For Fields, the win in the FCIAC final was a long time coming. He had been the conference runner-up the past two seasons.

"He's never won," Shook said. "He's a State Open champ, and we've been harassing him all week about FCIACs. He's won states, placed at Eastern States and placed in New England, but he had never won at FCIACs until today. His brother (former Hatter Jeremy) has been working with him a lot and Kyle is a very talented wrestler."

Fields managed to overcome a tough opponent to get the third-period pin.

"Freshman year I didn't wrestle in it, and then sophomore and junior year I lost (in the final), so this year, I was coming in to really try and win it," Fields said. "I knew (Parrott) was lengthy, and with lengthy kids it's hard to shoot on because they're all funky and stuff, so I just focused on the upper body and my top position. I'm pretty good on top and that's how I won."

For Trumbull, Travis Longo won an 18-3 technical fall against Greenwich's Carlos DeWinter at 113 pounds; Jack Ryan edged Danbury's Tyler Johnson 6-5 at 120 pounds; and Palmieri defeated Greenwich's Andrew Nanai 7-6 at 182 pounds.

For Eagles' head coach Charlie Anderson, who recently won his 300th match, the tournament showed the value of perseverance.

"When you lose a match, you've got to keep going hard," Anderson said. "I was happy with the intensity we showed today."



Trumbull's Joe Palmieri picks up 4 pts in the 3rd period against Greenwich's Andrew Nanai. Palmieri won 7-6. #ctwr

Palmieri's win was particularly satisfying, as he had never beaten Nanai and even lost to the Cardinal in last year's FCIAC finals.

In this year's rematch, Palmieri trailed 5-3 in the third period before scoring two on a reverse and two on a takedown to gain a 7-5 lead. Nanai escaped and nearly controlled Palmieri late, but the Trumbull wrestler held on for the one-point win.

"It feels really good," Palmieri said. "I lost to that kid in FCIACs last year and this is my first win in the (five) times we've wrestled. Before I let him dictate the match today, I really knew I had to go after it in the first period."

Warde also had three champs, with Joe Gjinaj (195 pounds), Hunter Rasmussen (170) and Noah Zuckerman (152) all winning in the finals.



Warde's Joe Gjinaj defeats Danbury's Montez Osbey for the 195-lb title #ctwr

One of the more dramatic wins of the finals game from Staples' Rizy, who avenged a regular-season loss to Danbury's Jordan Agosto and won via pinfall at 4:12 in the heavyweight bout.

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"When I wrestled him during the season, I had the cradle locked up and then the guy on the clock forgot to start it and it didn't count, so I lost 5-1," Rizy said. "So when I got the opportunity today, I hit it, pinned him and I'm extremely happy."

Staples' George Harrington, the heavyweight champ last year, claimed the 220-pound title this year, beating McMahon's Jeff Cocchia, 12-9.

Rizy gave Harrington credit for helping him win his first tournament title.

"I have to thank my coaches and my teammate George Harrington," Rizy said. "If I hadn't been wrestling him for three years, I don't know where I'd be. There's no one tougher than him."

Host New Canaan had a pair of repeat champions, as Tyler Sung (145) pinned Danbury's Ben LeBlanc in 3:47, and Justin Mastroianni (138) defeated Trumbull's Matt Ryan 5-1.



Staples' Jacob Rizy pins Danbury's Jordan Agosto to win the 220-lb final #ctwr @fciac

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Staples' George Harrington takes down McMahon's Jeff Cocchia in the way to a 12-9 win in the 220-lb final #ctwr

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New Canaan's Tyler Sung pins Danbury's Ben LeBlanc in the @FCIAC 145-pound wrestling final #ctwr

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Ridgefield's Lazar Agoev (160) also claimed a title, scoring a 10-6 decision against New Canaan's Christian Sibbett.

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2019 Joe Sikorski FCIAC Wrestling Tournament

Team scores: 1 – Danbury 257; 2 – Trumbull 200; 3 – Warde 177; 4 – Staples 131; 5 – Brien McMahon 113; 6 – New Canaan 113; 7 – Ridgefield 88; 8 – Ludlowe 87; 9 – Westhill 86.5; 10 – Greenwich 84; 11 – Norwalk 63; 12 – Stamford 33; 13 – Wilton 17

99 pounds (exhibition): Liam Byrne (Danbury) pinned Alex Blaha (Ridgefield) 1:32;

106 pounds: Kai Odell (Danbury) dec. Michael Longo (Trumbull) 2-0 in OT;

113 pounds: Travis Longo (Trumbull) tech fall Carlos DeWinter (Greenwich) 18-3;

120 pounds: Jack Ryan (Trumbull) dec. Tyler Johnson (Danbury) 6-5;

126 pounds: Ryan Jack (Danbury) dec. Ben Smart (Ridgefield) 8-4;

132 pounds: Kyle Fields (Danbury) pinned Chase Parrott (Westhill) 5:03;

138 pounds: Justin Mastroianni (New Canaan) dec. Matt Ryan (Trumbull) 5-1;

145 pounds: Tyler Sung (New Canaan) pinned Ben LeBlanc (Danbury) 3:47;

152 pounds: Noah Zuckerman (Warde) dec. Tommy Mazur (Westhill) 6-1;

160 pounds: Lazar Agoev (Ridgefield) dec. Christian Sibbett (New Canaan) 10-6;

170 pounds: Hunter Rasmussen (Warde) major dec. Jonathan Davilla (McMahon) 10-0;

182 pounds: Joseph Palmieri (Trumbull) dec. Andrew Nanai (Greenwich) 7-6;

195 pounds: Joe Gjinaj (Warde) dec. Montez Osbey (Danbury) 8-3;

220 pounds: George Harrington (Staples) dec. Jeff Cocchia (McMahon) 12-9;

285 pounds: Jacob Rizo (Staples) pinned Jordan Agosto (Danbury) 4:12