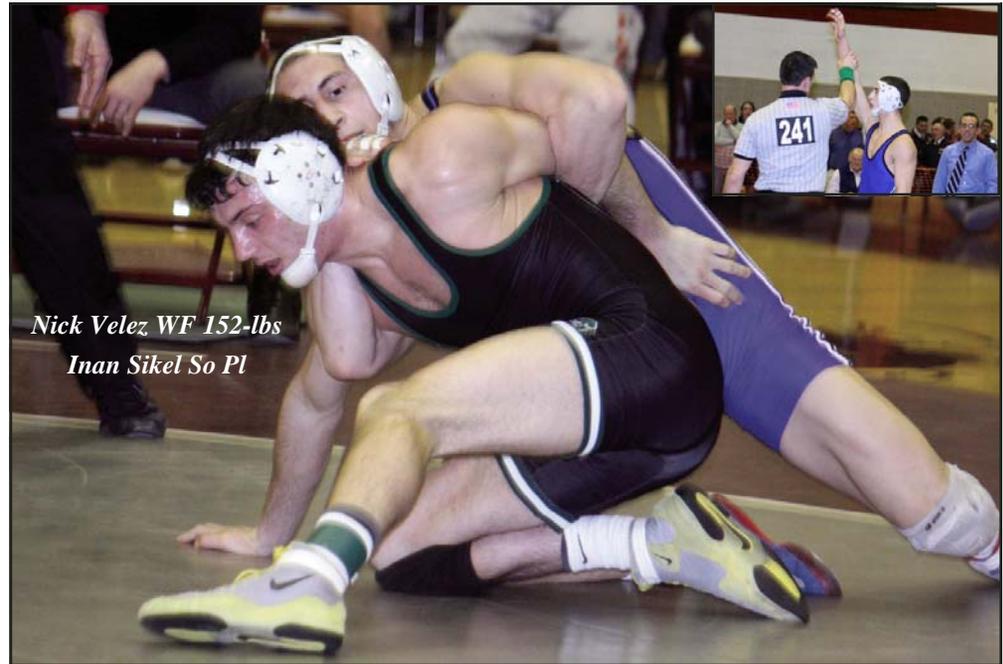




*Cougar Gavin Murray 138-lbs
Alex Murray Wat Hills*



*Nick Velez WF 152-lbs
Inan Sikel So Pl*

BLUE DEVIL FULLER PLACES 2ND; WF's BARBER, COUGARS DiGIOVANNI, CAPPELLO 3RD

WF's Velez, Cougar Murray Win Region 3 Mat Crowns

By DAVID B. CORBIN

Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

Milestones, a pair of upset victories and a flurry of activity in the waning seconds of a title bout highlighted the Region 3 Wrestling Tournament in Union on February 28 and March 1. Three Westfield High School wrestlers and three Cranford Cougars qualified for the NJSIAA Tournament to be held at Boardwalk Hall in Atlantic City (AC) beginning tomorrow, March 6 through Sunday, March 8.

Two wrestlers, Cougar junior

Gavin Murray (138-lbs) and Roselle Park senior Phil Woods (182-lbs) achieved their 100th career victories, and Watchung Hills (WH) senior Mike Megaldo (132-lbs) reached his 150th victory in his semifinal bout.

Blue Devil Nick Velez, seeded third at 152-lbs, after earning a grueling 7-6 victory in his quarterfinal bout, knocked off second-seeded Delbarton's (D) Joe Tavoso, 4-3. Velez scored the first takedown, but was trailing, 3-2, until he escaped in the final seconds of the second pe-

riod then added an escape in the third to win.

"I stayed focused, took one shot at a time. I took it step-by-step. Eventually I got three shots and I finished one of them. It was big at the end of the period. Second period, I held him out like 15 seconds. He got the takedown, but I got out. That escape gave me a point. Without that escape, it would have gone into overtime, but I am very confident on my feet," said Velez, who added, "I got one more match and I am going to give it my all."

In his title bout against South Plainfield's (SoP) Inan Sikel, Velez saved the best to last, getting an escape with 19 seconds remain-

ing and shooting quickly for the takedown to earn a 3-2 decision and the title.

"I wasn't even keeping time in my mind. I was going to keep wrestling and I got the takedown at the end. The best time to score is when you already scored. That's how I figured that," Velez said.

Murray achieved his 100th win when he defeated North Plainfield's Dom Mulhearn, 9-2, but not without a battle.

"He was real strong and physical. He wanted to wrestle. He was a competitor. I was under the weather and he came out to game it. He showed it out there. He wrestled a really good match," said Murray, who added, "It's a landmark number. It means nothing really. It was in my first three years, but I would like to get the

school record of 129, but there is still so much greatness to accomplish," Murray said.

Looking ahead to his semifinal bout with Hanover Park's (HP) Joe Zecca, Murray said, "I will be a lot more hydrated, healthy. I got to go and wrestle my match again,"

Murray did wrestle his match and pinned Zecca in 5:40 then he recorded an escape and a takedown to beat Alex Murray (WH), 3-0, for the 138-lb title.

"I knew I was going to be faster and more technical. It was going to be a scrap. It's the region finals. Everyone is good at this point. I worked all year for this. Now it's on to the next step," Murray said.

The pair of stunning upsets were

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