

## Westfield PAL Matmen Score Big at State Tournament

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 seasons then Harry runs the Blue team," explained Rabinowitz.

"The Blue team is similar to the White team in that it is second grade on to sixth. It is a little bit more advanced. The competition is stiffer and it is probably in one of the toughest leagues throughout the state of New Jersey," coach Kalimtzis explained.

Brian Bulger, a sixth grader who has been with the program five years, won his CJL crown and finished with a 9-1 record. Bulger noted that the match he remembers the most was, "the one I lost."

Fourth grader Brendon Curry, a 57-pounder in his second year whose favorite move is the nearside cradle, finished his regular season 10-0 and lost, 2-1, in the finals of the CJL Blue team tournament.

"It was great match. It went right to the end," commented coach Rabinowitz.

Vincent Difilippo, a third grader whose favorite move is a Petersen roll, competed primarily against fifth and sixth graders.

"This is a kid you just love to have on your team. He doesn't stop," said Rabinowitz.

Zach Rabinowitz, a 50-pound second grader, finished 9-1 and lost a squeaker in the finals of the CJL via double overtime rideout.

Matt Rittendale, a 60-lb first grader in his second year, went 8-2.

"My favorite move is the double leg takedown," commented Rittendale.

Successful programs always include behind the scene efforts. Rabinowitz and Kalimtzis noted that they have received great parental support.

"Years ago there were a handful of parents who were doing all the work. Now there are so many asking what they could do to help. That's a big part of the success of the program," said coach Kalimtzis.

Successful programs, however, are not without growing pains. "We need more gym space," pleaded Rabinowitz.

"We have grown so much. We only get the high school gym four days a week. So, we get Edison cafeteria and Roosevelt cafeteria. We have to move all the tables, get the mats out, clean the mats, wrestle, roll the mats up, put them back in the closet and put all the tables back. We will practice probably 11 practices during the week among all the different age groups so

if anybody would like to give us more gym space, feel free."

Despite the growing pains, the majority of the wrestlers have shown great progress and eight qualified for the state tournament. To qualify, an individual must place in the top three in one of eight qualifying tournaments, held throughout the state.

"They take the top 24 kids for the state. The juniors and intermediates were held in Elizabeth and the mid-gets and Bantams were held in Union. They had six mats running at a time," explained coach Kalimtzis.

Christian Barber (intermediate eighth grader), Matt Albano (intermediate eighth grader), Helen Delpopilo (intermediate eighth grader), Erik Godzieski (intermediate eighth grader), Pafumi (intermediate seventh grader), Skibitsky (junior seventh grader), Mike Kalimtzis (junior seventh grader) and Matt Barber (midget fifth grader) all won bids to enter into the competition.

Skibitsky, who has been in the program since first grade, placed eighth in the state at 95-lbs. It was his second state qualification.

Pafumi, who has been competing since second grade and won his class at states last year, place third this year

at the 130-lb class.

"I had a pretty good season. I came back off a broken wrist," said Pafumi.

"Tony wrestled 112 last year as a second-year junior. The divisions are broken into two-year intervals. He had to jump up to a first-year intermediate so he was mostly wrestling eighth graders. He also jumped up to 130-lbs. That's a significant jump. To come back and take third place is a big accomplishment," said coach Kalimtzis.

Matt Barber placed fourth in the state tournament and his brother Christian, who also qualified, commented, "My favorite move is the switch."

"(Westfield High School) Coach (Glen) Kurz has got his eye on a few of these guys and is interested in having them up with the program," commented coach Kalimtzis.

"We had a little over 100 kids in the program and we had eight kids place in the states. That's a pretty high percentage. We are heading in the right direction and this is our future. I'm very proud of them," concluded coach Rabinowitz.

Any parents interested in having their child enroll in the program can visit [www.westfieldpalwrestling.com](http://www.westfieldpalwrestling.com)

## WF PAL's John Dugan Named NJSYFL Grid Coach of Year

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In 2005, Dugan set up a team visit with the PAL sixth grade team, who were Super Bowl Champions, with veterans at the Lyons Veterans Hospital in Lyons. Players mingled with veterans from the WWII, Korean and Viet Nam wars and learned about some of the sacrifices that these veterans made for their country.

"A life-long friend of mine, Bill Ard, who played professional football came to me and said, 'come on I got to go up to Lyons Hospital and sign some footballs.' I went up there with a few of the (New York) Giants and watched them interact with some of the veterans. I said, 'You know what? The kids who I coach would really appreciate it.' I told the parents that we would spend an hour with them," said Dugan.

"Well, it was about two-and-one-half hours because the kids responded so well with the veterans. They were listening to veterans who were shot out of the sky during World War II and Viet Nam. They were listening to veterans who were held in captivity by the Japanese. These kids were so enthralled and the veterans really responded to the kids.

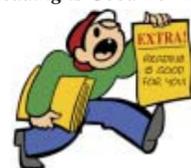
It was a great mix."

Similar visits by the PAL footballers are planned for this spring with a children's hospital.

"He is the epitome of a great coaching person. He represents what we want in our football league," said Yeager.

"I really believe in making this more than just a football program," said Dugan. "We signed up in June, we started in September and we finished in November. That's it! It's springtime and we will be visiting a children's specialized hospital. This is why I like to make it throughout the year. I want them to have that camaraderie."

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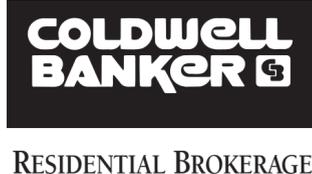
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