

State champ leads All-Area matmen

By Brad Emmons
staff writer

This annual All-Area Wrestling Team brings out the best in each weight class, but Catholic Central's Joe Urso, the state Class A champion at 167 pounds, is definitely *The Elite* among the elite.

The CC standout leads this year's team, selected recently by the coaches. "My kids are special, but this kid (Urso) is special," said CC coach Mike Rodriguez. "He'd run five miles in practice, go home and eat dinner, study, and then run 15 on his own."

"He had calluses on his hands from doing pull-ups — just a tremendously dedicated athlete. I could talk about him all night."

Urso came out for wrestling at CC after deciding he was too short to play basketball (he's 6-foot-1).

"He wore braces as a freshman and sophomore," said Rodriguez. "He'd get hit in the mouth and be bleeding all the time. His father was concerned about it, but he endured all that."

Urso also excels in the classroom, carrying a 3.46 grade-point average.

"He's very likeable," said the CC coach. "There's not a teacher in the school who doesn't have a kind word about him. He's very Christian. He'd pray before the matches, not to win, but to have the strength to do it."

Urso, who holds a career record of 122-20, has been selected to wrestle later this month in the Michigan-Ohio dual meet.

Purdue has already offered him a full-ride scholarship, according to Rodriguez. Notre Dame and Michigan are also interested.

Joining Urso on the All-Area squad are Dan Gibson of Westland John Glenn and Mark Zenas of Livonia Bentley, both of whom finished third in their respective weight classes.

Here is a rundown of the first teamers.

FIRST TEAM

Jim Malson, heavyweight, Plymouth Canton: The Canton heavyweight was 26-13 as a junior to go along with individual titles at the North Farmington and Rochester Adams Invitational.

"Jim was much improved wrestler over last year," said Canton coach Dan Chrenko. "He wrestled well in the pressure matches."

The referees called for a jump ball and regulation time ended with the teams still tied.

"Matt used that play when he was in CYO ball in Chicago," explained Conti. "We used that play three times. Once when he was on the junior varsity and twice since then. We've gotten double-team violations three times on that play."

Fedio said the play differently. "I felt it was a bad call . . . but there's nothing we can do about it," said Fedio. "You do what you have to do to win. We can't change that call. But, overall, I thought the refs did a nice job."

Rice scored the game's first basket, but Lahser reeled off the next six points and immediately set the tone for the rest of the game. The Knight front line handled itself very well against

Dave Hovey, 98 pounds, Farmington: A state qualifier, Hovey placed fourth in the district and second in the regional tournament to Temperance-Bedford's Dave Harper. He won one or three matches at the state meet.

The junior also captured the Western Lakes championship this season and finished with a 29-8 record.

Rick Gillies, 105, Westland John Glenn: A state qualifier, Gillies finished the year with a 32-7 record.

The talented senior was second at both the district and regional meets and won the Plymouth Invitational and Northwest Suburban League (NSL) crowns.

"Rick is the kind of young man every coach wants on his team," said Glenn coach Tom Buckalew. "He works hard and never complains. He's a leader by example."

Dan Gibson, 112, Westland John Glenn: Third in Class A, Gibson scored victories this season over two state champions en route to a 34-3 record.

He was first at Glenn Invitational and was named MVP. The junior also won the Hocket Invitational, NSL, district and regional crowns.

"Dan has worked very hard all year and it paid off," said Buckalew. "He should have an outstanding senior year."

Mike Rossi, 119, Westland John Glenn: The senior was a surprise fourth at the state meet, placing runner-up Greg Ellis in the process.

Sporting a 37-10 season state, Rossi won the Salem Invitational and was named MVP. He was second at the district and regional.

"Mike set his goals high," said the Glenn coach. "He wanted to place in the state tournament and worked to that end throughout the year. Everything came together for him at the right time. Mike will be missed next year."

Abe Yaffal, 126, Livonia Bentley: Born in Yemen, Yaffal went undefeated until the state meet (including a tie with state champ Todd Snooks of Birmingham Brother Rice).

He wrestled at 119 at the state meet after winning district and regional crowns. The All-Area repeater also won invitational crowns at Wayne and Schoolcraft.

He finished with a sparkling 39-2-1 record.

Jeff Newton, 145, Redford Thurston: An 11th grader, Newton won the NSL title and was a Class B state qualifier.

"Jeff is a fine athlete with a great attitude," said Thurston coach Tom McIntosh. "He was a pleasure to coach and we expect big things in his senior year."

Tim Collins, 138, Plymouth Canton: Another All-Area repeater, Collins was an impressive four-year performer, sporting a 119-16 career record.

This season, Collins won titles at Belleville, Glenn, North Farmington, Rochester Adams and captured the Western Lakes title.

The two-time state qualifier posted a 43-6 record en route to the state meet.

"Tim is an outstanding wrestler — a natural leader," said Canton coach Dan Chrenko. "He's very coachable."

Mark Zenas, 165, Livonia Bentley: Only a junior, Zenas was a surprise at the state meet, winning five of six matches en route to third place.

Displaying a 42-7 record, Zenas won the Schoolcraft, Brother Rice and Western Lakes Conference titles. He was third at the district and third at the regional.

Dave Scott, 196, Livonia Churchill: The senior captain excelled in the big meets, finishing first in the Western Lakes and Livonia City events. He grabbed first at the Clarencville and Garden City tournaments.

By placing third in the district, Scott qualified for the regional.

"David is a very hard worker in practice and very dedicated to the sport of wrestling," said Churchill coach Mike Abdo.



Joe Urso
Catholic Central
record for the season.

John Jeannotte, 132, Plymouth Salem: The Salem senior captain "was a good leader for us on and off the mat."

Jeannotte was second in the Western Lakes Conference, district and regional. He also won invitational titles at Glenn, Wayne and Monroe.

For the year, Jeannotte posted a 32-10 record.

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Mike DiManno, 155, Catholic Central: The senior co-captain finished fifth in his weight class at the state meet.

DiManno is a two-time Catholic League, district and regional champ. This season, he won invitational crowns at Battle Creek, Bay City and Mount Clemens.

He carried out a 60-4 record with 38 pins. His career record was 132-43.

Joe Urso, 167, Catholic Central: The state champion was 62-2 this season, including 37 pins. He set season school records for most points (598) and most wins (52).

He is a three-time Catholic League and two-time district champion. The CC standout also captured five other titles during the season.

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Photos by Dan Dean

Lahser falls to Rice in OT

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Rice's monster forwards like Dingens (6-foot-6), Jeff Herberholz (6-7) and Tim Ervin (6-6).

RICE HAD a 43-39 going into the final quarter.

Lahser received clutch baskets from Steve Sack and Darren Munson to come within one point, then went ahead 50-48 when Davis hit a three-point play with 1:36 left. Wheelock scored the game-tying basket on a tip in with 1:10 remaining.

The game went into overtime after Dingens' cerebral play at the foul line. In the first overtime, Rice scored first on a pair of free throws from Ervin.

Rice started the second overtime with a pair of free throws from junior guard B.J. Armstrong, who finished with 16 assists and eight rebounds. Sack scored on a short jumper to knot the score at 54, then Kolp scored two

straight baskets for a 58-54 Rice lead. Lewry followed with a pair of free throws and Davis scored a lay-up with 15 seconds left to send the game into its third three-minute extra period.

The Warriors' only basket of the final overtime was from Dingens. But Armstrong contributed seven free throws, including the winning one with just 25 seconds left.

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HONORABLE MENTION
Westland John Glenn: Jeff Doty, Dan Schimansky and Darrell Grassmyer.

Catholic Central: Eric Johnson, Mike Wiczewski and Mike Rice.

Plymouth Canton: Heath Smith, Scott Tasker and Mike Graczyk.

Plymouth Salem: Rick Vershova, Ken Freeman and Bill Morley.

North Farmington: Mike Zareck, Todd Brown, Pat Leavy and Ron Benas.

Garden City: Roger Osler, K.C. Howell, Horbe Hergen, Pat Cyrus, Mike Howell and Larry Combs.

Farmington: Dan Parilo, Darrell Thairish and John Augustin.

Livonia Churchill: David Hooks and John Parr.

Livonia Stevenson: John Tasic, Gary Glarencville, Dave Ben, Dean Estep and Tony Galoneau.

Redford Thurston: Jerry Pasco, Redford Union: Larry Mauer, Ron Fowler and Dave Mikols.

Livonia Franklin: Scott Weaver and Doug Sutter.

Farmington Harrison: Dennis Romps.

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