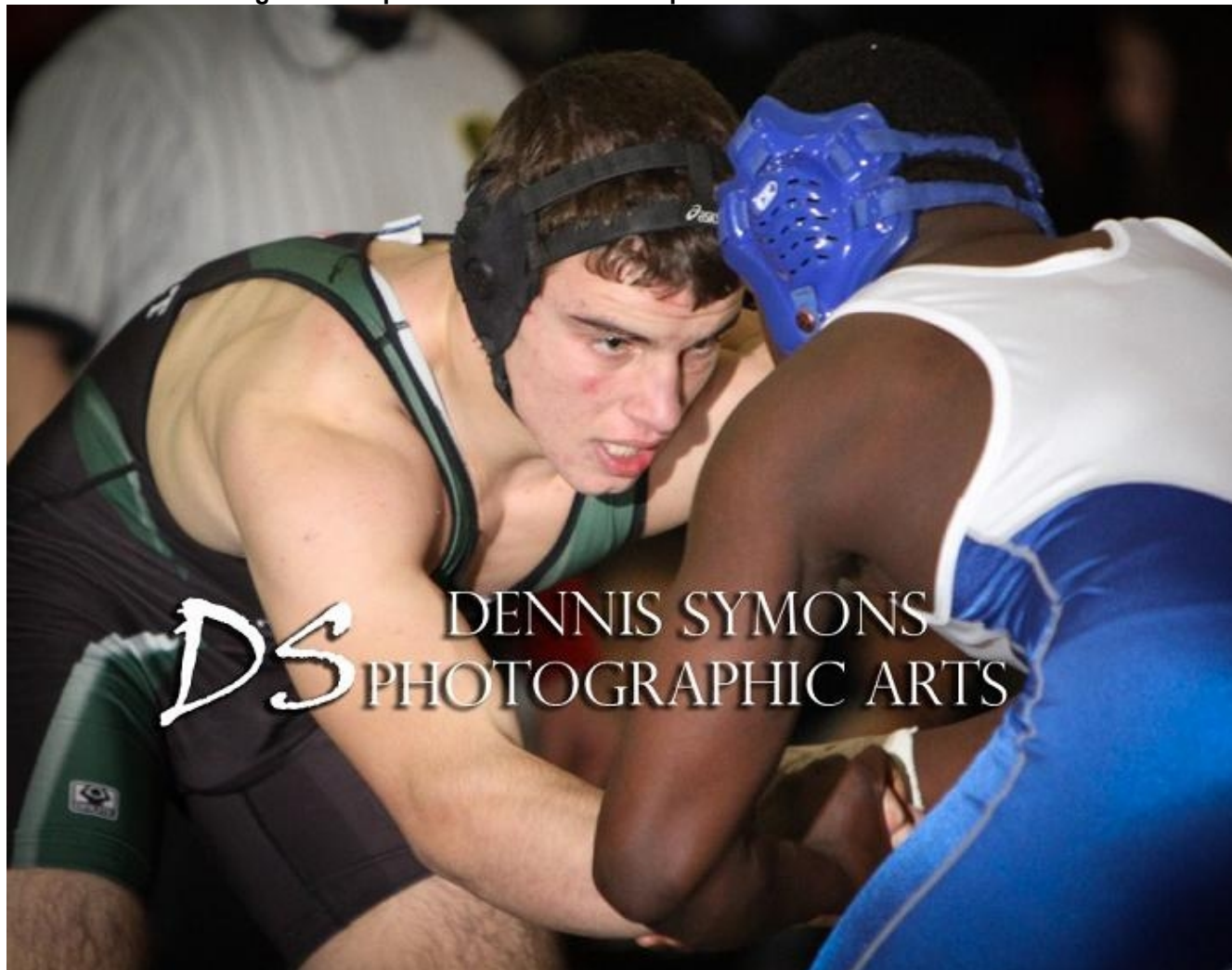


Jan. 28 MCT Wrestling – 5 champs for Hamilton Township!



Steinert sophomore Matt McDonald stares into the eyes of Hightstown's Angel Kargbo during the MCT 160-pound finals, which McDonald won 9-3 (Photo by Dennis Symons Jr./purchase photos at www.denissymons.com).

It's a banner day for Hamilton Township with five champions on podium

By Ken Weingartner

Fish4scores.com

Jan. 28: It was a gold medal day for Hamilton Township's wrestling teams.

Township wrestlers won five championships at today's Mercer County Tournament at Robbinsville High, with all three squads sharing in the excitement.

Steinert and Hamilton West both had two champs. The Spartans' Joe Michel won his second MCT crown, this time at 126 pounds after winning at 112 last season, and was joined by sophomore teammate Matt McDonald in getting to the top of the podium. McDonald won the title at 160.

West saw Jared Staub win the championship at 120 by taking a 7-4 decision over Steinert's Tyler Beers and Anthony Kubish fought off his back to claim the title at 145 with a 6-4 "sudden victory" in extra time.

Nottingham had to wait until the tourney's final match to see a champion, with Jancel Nunez knocking off No. 1-seeded Matt Apuzzi of Lawrenceville Prep, 12-5 at 182, to send the Swamprats home happy.

Steinert finished second to defending champ Hopewell Valley in the team standings. West finished sixth and Nottingham was tied for eighth in the 16-team tourney.

Here's a closer look at how each team fared:

HAMILTON

The third time was the charm for Staub, who captured the elusive MCT title after finishing second as a freshman and fourth last year while battling the flu.

Staub, a two-time state qualifier, was seeded first at 120 and marched to the championship by



getting a technical fall over Lawrence's Gavin Schenk and major decision over Allentown's Chris Weitz on his way to the final, where he downed Beers.

"This means a lot," said Staub, who is 14-1. "This is the icing on the cake. I guess it was my time to win it. I'm stoked to win it, but I've still got districts around the corner, and that's when it really counts.

"I feel like there's always room for improvement," he added, "but I feel I wrestled

Hamilton's Anthony Kubish has things going his way against Lawrenceville's Alex McLaughlin in the 145-pound finals (Photo by Dennis Symons Jr./purchase photos at www.dennissymons.com).

pretty good."

Kubish was the No. 1 seed at 145 and battled his way to the championship with a 5-4 win over Hopewell Valley's Luke Palker in the semis and his 6-4 "sudden victory" in the final over Lawrenceville Prep's Alex McLaughlin. Kubish led the title tilt, 4-1, entering the third period, but McLaughlin locked a cradle and got three backpoints to tie the score. Kubish, who expended a lot of energy avoiding a pin, got a takedown in overtime to earn the victory, and then collapsed to his back exhausted.

"I couldn't even stand up," said Kubish, a junior who is 13-2. "I thought my conditioning would be way better than that. I used all my energy to not get pinned, so that's probably why I gassed.

"But this is really big. This is the first tournament I've ever won in my high school career. It feels good to be on top of the podium."

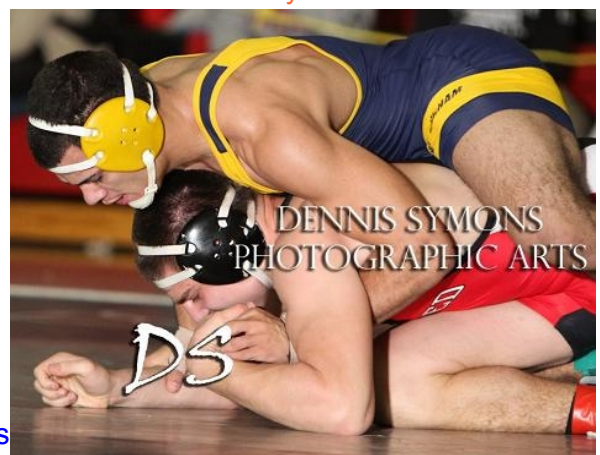
Other place-winners for the Hornets were Chris Bohorquez (106) and Darius Miller (152), who were fourth, Nick Cecala (126) and Ryan Carson-Burch (170) in fifth and Mark McKenzie (182) in sixth.

And a special note of recognition and appreciation to former Hornet wrestler Mike Staub, who did a great job helping run the tourney and providing results to the media. Everyone at Robbinsville does a first-class job in hosting the event.

NOTTINGHAM

Of the 14 weight classes, 11 were won by No. 1 seeds. Two were won by No. 2 seeds. And then there was what happened at 182, where Nunez became the Cinderella of the day by capturing the title as the third seed.

Nunez didn't catch any lucky breaks, either, as he had to beat No. 2 Joey DeCristofaro of Hightstown, 11-10, in the semis and knock off the top-seeded Apuzzi in the final. DeCristofaro and Apuzzi each had only one loss prior to meeting Nunez.



Jancel Nunez works on Lawrenceville's Matt Appuzz in the finals (Photo by Dennis Symons Jr.)

It took a late rally for Nunez to pull out the win over DeCristofaro. Trailing 9-6 late in the third period, Nunez got a takedown and three backpoints for an 11-9 advantage. He let DeCristofaro escape with four seconds remaining and came away with his one-point triumph.

Nunez was fifth in the MCT as a sophomore and missed nearly all of last season because of a knee injury.

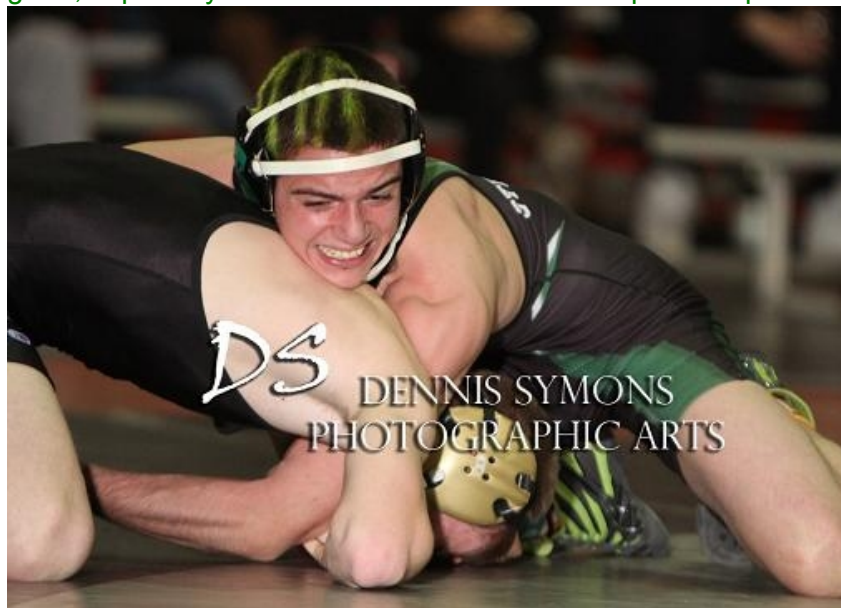
"This means everything to me," said Nunez, a senior who is 19-3. "My conditioning was the key. I never get tired. I never give up. If I fall behind, it gives me motivation; it wakes me up. This gives me confidence that I can make it to states. That's where I want to make it to."

Wroway Williams finished third at 195 for the Swamprats while Hector Comulado (220) was fifth and Josh Magee (106), Jacob Kouroume (126), Waleed Abouelela (145) and Kevin Ronan (285) were sixth.

STEINERT

Michel had a few anxious moments in the closing seconds of his win over Hopewell Valley's John deDufour, nearly giving up a takedown, but sprawled from trouble to hold on for a 1-0 triumph. He improved to 17-1 this season and has won 14 consecutive matches.

"I almost got caught at the end there and lost, but I pulled it out," Michel said with a laugh. "It's great, especially as a senior. It's nice to be on top of that podium. This was my last shot to do it. It's a great feeling."



Steinert's Joe Michel bears down against Hopewell's John deDufour in the 126-pound finals (Photo by Dennis Symons Jr./purchase photos at www.dennissymons.com).

Michel opened the tourney with a 4-2 win over Nottingham's Jacob Kouroume and beat West's Nick Cecala, 10-2, in the semifinals.

"My first match was a little rough; I wrestled a little lazy," Michel said. "Today I knew I had to pick it up if I wanted to beat Cecala and move on to the finals. My [final] match was real tough. He was stay back toward the line a lot, so it was tough to get a takedown without going out of bounds."

Last year, Michel won the title at 112 as the fifth seed. This season, he came in as No. 1, which was how he exited, as well.

"It gives me a lot of confidence," Michel said. "Hopefully I'll be on top of the podium again at districts."

McDonald also hopes to use his county title as a springboard to future success. He opened his tourney with an 8-6 win over Notre Dame's Zach Hankinson before beating Allentown's Mark Meloro, 5-3, in the semis. Seeded first, McDonald faced seventh-seeded Angel Kargbo of Hightstown in the final and won, 9-3.

"It feels great," said McDonald, who is 15-1. "I've been working hard all year for it. I think my first match started out pretty bad, but I started working harder and got better. After the first match I figured I could do better and it pushed me."

McDonald had additional motivation in wanting to win for his brother, Sean, who suffered a leg injury while wrestling at 170 and needed to have surgery today. Sean ended up sixth in the tourney.

“I wanted to win for him,” Matt said. “He’s been working hard this whole year. I feel badly for him.”

In addition to Beers’ runner-up finish to Staub at 126, the Spartans got a second-place effort from heavyweight Mike Remboski, who upset No. 1 seed Tyler Gildner of Robbinsville in the semifinals thanks to a 28-second pin. Shaun Augustyn (145) and Brandon Bernstein (152) both finished third and Luis Leon (220) was sixth.

“Last year, I couldn’t wrestle because I had the flu,” said Beers, a junior with a 14-4 record. “This is really my first year in the tournament, so I thought it was a good tournament overall. I was motivated to make it to the finals, and possibly win. I think I wrestled very well.”

Steinert coach Adam Jankos was happy with the squad’s performance.

“I’m definitely pleased with [second place] and I think we had a lot of opportunities to even get a lot more points,” he said. “Some of the guys weren’t focused, but then we had other guys that were on a mission. [Augustyn] was the sixth seed and he took third. We had four guys in the finals and we haven’t had four guys in the finals in a long time. To get to champions out of that, I’m really pleased with that. A lot of guys wrestled really well.”

The Spartans, as a whole, saw what it takes to reach the top.

“Joe Michel leads this team and shows us what to do and now he’s got a partner in crime in Matt McDonald,” Jankos said. “Having two leaders like that really helps out your team so your kids can see them and how they’re winning and what it takes to be a champion. Hopefully we get a lot more from that.”