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W.I.N. Magazine's Junior Nationals Highlights

By Rob Sherrill, W.I.N. High School Editor

Fargo, N.D. — Brandon High School came to Fargo loaded with stars. The wrestlers' expectations were high ... and they expected to deliver.

But perhaps even the wrestlers of this Florida high school didn't anticipate that they would break many Asics Vaughan USAW Fargo Junior Nationals records built over the course of 35 years.

The record haul reached its peak in the Junior National Greco-Roman Championships, when the school advanced five wrestlers to the finals — Florida had six finalists in all — and crowned three champions.

By the time the week of July 23-30 had ended, the Sunshine State boys had gone 3-for-3 in championship matches in the freestyle tournament as well.

The following are Florida's records:

- Most finalists from one school, one tournament: 5
- Most champions from one school, one tournament: 3 (tied record)
- Most finalists from one school, both tournaments: 8
- Most champions from one school, both tournaments: 6
- Most double champions: 2 (tied record)

Add Eric Grajales' Cadet Nationals Greco-Roman title to Florida's haul and the total number of Brandon champions for the week swelled to seven.

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Brandon's Franklin Gomez (119), competing for his native Puerto Rico, and junior David Craig (171) were among a record seven double champions in the event.

The rest included Boris Novachkov (98) and Robby Smith (215) of California, Blairstown (N.J.) Blair Academy graduate Adam Frey (130) of Pennsylvania, Brent Metcalf (145) of Michigan and Louis Caputo (189) of Missouri.

Davison High-graduate Metcalf tied the Junior Nationals record with his third consecutive double title and was voted the Outstanding Wrestler in both tournaments, tying the standard set by New Yorker Troy Nickerson a year ago. Novachkov and Mike Grey (125) of New Jersey added to the national freestyle titles they won as Cadets, Grey advancing to the top step for the first time in three years.

Let's move on to the individual weight classes and a rundown of what happened:

98 pounds: Novachkov, who attends Fremont High, prevailed over Pennsylvanian Jake Quinten in both finals, winning 12-7 in the Greco-Roman finals and rallying from a 4-1 deficit for a 9-7 freestyle victory. Quinten didn't have a match go the distance in either tournament prior to the finals and was unscored upon in freestyle prior to the final. Michigan's Bryan Rickard also was an All-American in both styles.

105 pounds: Marty Eng of Newberg (Ore.) High, who missed last year's Juniors after breaking his wrist in training camp, made his return to Fargo a winning trip as he won the Greco-Roman title. Eng scored the only pin of the finals, putting away California's Kellen Aura in 5:24. Missouri's run began here with St. Louis-area stars Donte Butler of Sumner High and Vito Krischke of Cedar Hill Northwest High.

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Amazingly, neither won a state title this year — Butler finished third in state, Krischke second — but Butler kept Eng from a shot at a second title with an 8-0 victory in the freestyle round robin and both Missourians placed high in both styles. Mark Kist of Eagle Grove High, the first of Iowa's three freestyle champions, beat Butler, 7-1, for the title, the only match he had that went the distance or allowed a point. Delaware's Connor McDonald also was a double All-American.

112 pounds: Tony Mustari of Greeley Central (Colo.) High dominated this weight much of the week, except the second period and overtime of the Greco-Roman final, when state champion Matt Kyler of Clearfield (Pa.) High rallied from a 6-0 first-period deficit to win the title, 8-6, in overtime. Leading 6-4, Mustari was put down with 14 seconds remaining in regulation and Kyler scored a gut wrench with five seconds remaining to tie the match, forcing overtime.

Mustari left nothing to chance in the freestyle tournament, outscoring his eight opponents, 82-0. Instead, it was Kyler's turn to get upset, falling 3-2 in overtime to Aaron Hart of St. Paris (Ohio) Graham High in the seventh round. Hart was no match for Mustari in the final as the Colorado native ended the match in less than two minutes. Zach Sanders of Minnesota and Matt McNaughton of Illinois also were double All-Americans.

119 pounds: Gomez got the Brandon avalanche rolling with a double championship. He had tough matches in pool competition in each tournament. A 5-2 victory over Brad Pataky of Clearfield (Pa.) High in an uncharacteristically early second-round match and a 5-4 squeaker over Minnesota's Seth Flodeen in the pool final tested him in the Greco-Roman tournament.

Elite junior Ben Ashmore of Dallas (Texas) Bishop Lynch High gave Gomez all he could handle in a 5-4 freestyle round robin match. But neither final was much of a test, Gomez beating Joey Martin of Simsbury (Conn.) High, 11-0, in the Greco-Roman final and shutting out Blair Academy graduate Ross Gitomer, 8-0, for the freestyle title. Pataky also earned double All-America honors.

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125 pounds: Having wrestled below his expectations in the past two Junior Nationals, Grey appeared headed for another disappointment after being upset, 5-2, by Ohio's Dan Mitcheff in the fifth round. Other than that, however, the field couldn't touch Grey. He had a 19-second pin and outscored his other seven opponents 72-0, and when Mitcheff lost, 5-3, to double All-American Steve Mytych of Pennsylvania two rounds later, Grey advanced to the finals with a 5-4 edge over Mitcheff in round-robin points. In the final, Grey beat Shawn Jones of Blackfoot (Idaho) Snake River High, 15-7, ending Jones' bid for a double title. In an all-Idaho Greco-Roman final, Jones blanked Josh Strait of Arimo Marsh Valley High, 6-0.

130 pounds: Frey had some lapses in his championship matches, but he was clearly the class of the weight. He allowed only one point in the Greco-Roman tournament and appeared headed toward another blowout in the finals when he raced to a 7-0 lead over Elijah Hutchison of Soldotna (Alaska) Skyview High in less than a minute. But Hutchison came roaring back, scoring several tilts to tie the score at 8-8 at the break. A rare escape early in the second period was the only further scoring as Frey escaped, 9-8.

An 11-6 victory over Minnesota's Jayson Ness in the eighth round and a 13-2 technical fall over rugged Joey Slaton of Iowa in the round robin were Frey's freestyle highlights. Jordan Frishkorn of Chesapeake (Va.) Great Bridge High, scored upon by just two pool opponents, also mounted a late comeback of sorts before Frey prevailed, 6-4. Missouri's Ryan Moyer also was a double All-American.

135 pounds: After a controversial finish gave Reece Humphrey of Indianapolis (Ind.) Lawrence North High a 4-3 overtime victory over Brandon's Cesar Grajales in the Greco-Roman final, Mitch Mueller of Iowa City West High ended a dominating freestyle performance by shutting out Humphrey, 6-0, in the title match. Two-time New Jersey state champion Darrion Caldwell of Rahway High was the only wrestler to score against Mueller or take him the distance, losing 4-1 in the eighth round. Grajales and Cam Watkins of Maryland also were double All-Americans.

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140 pounds: After injuring his knee and defaulting from the Greco-Roman tournament after starting 4-0, Cyler Sanderson of Heber City (Utah) Wasatch High came back to survive several close matches and win the freestyle title. Sanderson breezed through the first seven rounds before getting consecutive stern tests from Alaskan Kaylen Baxter (5-3 in overtime), elite junior Lance Palmer of Lakewood (Ohio) St. Edward (4-3) and double All-American J.P. O'Connor of Oxford (N.Y.) Academy (7-4). Surprise finalist Adam Hall of Bonners Ferry (Idaho) High took a 4-3 lead at the break, but Sanderson rallied for a 7-5 victory and the title. Hall derailed Blair Academy standout Travis Blasco's finals bid with a 9-5 round-robin victory, taking the finals berth on pool points.

Never an Illinois state champion, Brett Robbins of Bloomington High repeated as Greco-Roman champion, avenging a Junior Duals loss with a 10-0 technical fall over O'Connor for the title. O'Connor had beaten Robbins, 4-3, in the Junior Duals opener.

145 pounds: Metcalf. Enough said. He allowed only four points all week and his only close match was a 4-0 shutout over two-time Illinois champion Sean Reynolds of New Lenox Providence High in the eighth round of the freestyle meet. Matt Dragon of Lehman (Pa.) Lake Lehman High, the 152-pound Greco-Roman runner-up, dropped 13 pounds between that final and the first freestyle weigh-in to challenge Metcalf, who had to rally to beat him, 8-7, in the Dapper Dan Wrestling Classic in March. Metcalf again prevailed, this time by a pin. A 7-5 pool final victory over Kansan Joseph Cornejo was Dragon's only close freestyle match. Three-time Washington champion Brandon Sitch of Kelso High beat Cornejo, 8-3, en route to the Greco-Roman final.

152 pounds: A first-period tilt was the difference as Marco Toledo added his name to the Brandon hit parade, hanging on to nip Dragon, 3-2, in the Greco-Roman final. Toledo had to survive back-to-back 3-1 victories against Jonathan Reader of Davison (Mich.) High and Scott Glasser of Bismarck (N.D.) High — the second in overtime — to reach the finals. Ryan Morningstar of

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Lisbon (Iowa) High made as much of a case for Outstanding Wrestler honors as anyone. Morningstar was unscored upon in all 10 of his matches, capped by a 6-0 finals whipping of Shane Vernon of Broken Arrow (Okla.) High. Reader, third in both styles, wrestled Morningstar even tougher, losing 4-0 in the eighth round. Iowan Jake Kerr also was a double All-American.

160 pounds: Upset by teammate Jesse Robbins of Oviedo High in the Greco-Roman final, Brandon's Rocky Cozart, who had never won a national freestyle title, ended his high school career in style, shutting out Ryan Patrovich of Islip (N.Y.) High, 3-0. Robbins, who advanced to the final despite a 3-1 round-robin loss to Pennsylvanian Landis Wright, beat Cozart at his own game in the final. After a scoreless first period, Robbins scored a three-point throw off the second-period clinch to take the lead for good. Cozart narrowed the gap to 3-2 before walking into a Robbins headlock for three more points. Robbins went on to win 6-4. Cozart struggled past Iowa's Kyle Forness 7-4 in the second round of the freestyle meet, but allowed just two points the rest of the way. Wright and Washington's Kyle Bounds also were All-Americans in both styles.

171 pounds: Craig became Brandon's second double champion and solidified his position as one of the nation's top seniors next year with victories of 3-1 over Jeff James of El Reno (Okla.) High in the Greco-Roman final and 4-2 over Michael Moore of Oak Grove (Mo.) High in the freestyle final. In pool competition, however, Craig was dominant. He allowed just three points in the Greco-Roman tournament and Moore was the only wrestler to score against him in freestyle. Brent Chriswell of Port Orchard (Wash.) South Kitsap High also was solid in his third-place finish, losing, 8-0, to Craig in the sixth round. James, Idaho's Clayton Foster and Illinois' Duke Burk were double All-Americans.

189 pounds: Caputo, from Blue Springs High, and Kansas City-area teammate Taylor Moore (Oak Grove High) met for the third time this year. Caputo, who twice beat Moore during the high-school season, made it three straight with a 4-0 shutout win. Moore got to the finals with an 11-9 upset of Max Askren of Hartland (Wis.) Arrowhead High. Caputo allowed just seven points in going 19-0

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during the week. Trevor Perry of Davison (Mich.) High made it to the Greco-Roman finals on a 4-2 head-to-head win over California's Kyle Bergstedt after the two finished tied in round-robin points (4) and pool points (22).

215 pounds: Perhaps the most unlikely double champion was Smith, who had never finished higher than fourth in the state for Danville San Ramon Valley High and had never won a national age-group title. But after upsetting Brent Jones of Fairfax (Va.) Robinson High, 3-1, in the Greco-Roman final, Smith's flair for the dramatic peaked in the freestyle final, as he rallied from a 7-0 deficit to beat Daniel Erikson of Eagle (Idaho) High 10-9 in overtime. Smith was pinned by Nate Sipes of Curwensville (Pa.) High in the sixth round, but won his next two matches to reach the finals as Sipes was eliminated from the title chase with his second loss in the next round. Jones, Erikson and Minnesota's Daniel Eidenschink also were double All-Americans.

Heavyweight: The cowboy hat tradition began in earnest in the Greco-Roman final as Justin Wren of Dallas (Texas) Bishop Lynch High, never before a place-winner in a national tournament, took the Lone Star State's first national title in some time. A spectacular five-point throw off the second-period clinch was the only scoring in Wren's 5-0 victory over Erik Nye of Red Bluff (Calif.) High. Wren didn't allow a point in the tournament. Nye made amends in spectacular fashion in the tournament's final match, scoring a two-point tilt late in overtime to rally past Jared Rosholt of Ponca City (Okla.) High, 3-2. Rosholt had won all nine pool matches by technical fall. Drake McCoy of Georgia, Kenny Lester of Florida and Nathan Fernandez of Oklahoma also were double All-Americans.

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