

Dickinson, Gannon, Lear each take first place at District 32 tournament

By CHRISTOPHER SOUTH
Cape May Star and Wave

GALLOWAY TOWNSHIP – Three Lower Cape May Regional wrestlers earned the right Saturday night to stand atop of the medal stand at the District 32 championships at Absegami High School.

After a season of hard work and tough competition, Dylan Gannon, Chad Lear and Josh Dickinson became District 32 champions and helped LCMR to a fourth place team finish.

Dickinson took advantage of a penalty point forcing overtime to win the 112-pound class. Dylan Gannon built a solid 4-1 lead in regulation to win at 215 pounds, and Chaz Lear went the absolute distance to capture the 285 pound crown.

First place at 215

Gannon was the first Lower Cape May wrestler to win his final round, beating No. 2 seed Mark Capetola of Egg Harbor Township. No. 1 seed Gannon earned his way to the finals after taking a bye in the preliminaries and pinning Lucas Pearson of Ocean City in 5:39. He won a 1-0 decision over Mike Barber of Absegami early Saturday afternoon to get to the final round against Capetola.

Capetola beat Oakcrest's William Cheatham and No. 3 seed Joe Griner of Middle Township to advance to the finals.

Gannon wrestled Capetola to a 0-0 draw in the first period, but he nearly pinned the Eagle wrestler in the second, which ended with Gannon holding a 3-1 advantage. Gannon escaped from Capetola in the final period to win 4-1 at the end of the third period.

Gannon believed he could win the match.

"I was pretty confident. I faced him before and beat him 6-3. But it was hard," Gannon said. "He's really strong and has been wrestling a long time."

He said going into District 32 as the No. 1 seed boosted his confidence. Gannon said once he had Capetola in a cradle hold, he knew he was safe. In the third period he chose to start from the down position and added a point to his lead with an escape.

Gannon said tougher competition is ahead.

"There's a lot of tough kids in the Region (8 tournament)," Gannon said, naming Mahalo Camba of Cumberland, who is undefeated.

Gannon wrestled him his freshman year and they are members of the same wrestling club.

First place at 285

Next to make it to the winner's circle, in a roundabout way, was heavyweight Chaz Lear.

Lear got to the finals after a first round bye and then by

pinning Justin Rhinesmith of Middle Township in 2:15. Lear, the No. 1 seed, beat Andrew Baumgardner of St. Augustine in an 8-2 decision in the semifinals Saturday afternoon. He was in control most of the match.

His opponent in the finals, Dom Hinrichsen, the No. 2 seed, pinned Derek Weber of Ocean City in 59 seconds and Antoine Lewis of Mainland in 2:40 in the semifinals.

The big guys ended with big drama as Lear and Hinrichsen wrestled to a 1-1 draw at the end of regulation in the championship round. They were still 1-1 at the end of a one-minute overtime period. After a coin flip, Hinrichsen elected to take the down position and 30 seconds were put on the clock. Hinrichsen was able to escape and took a 2-1 lead.

Another 30 seconds were put on the clock, and the wrestling started with Lear in the down position. Lear escaped and tied the score again, 2-2.

The match then went to a ride-out. Since Hinrichsen won the coin toss earlier, he was given the choice of the down or up position, whether to attempt to escape or hang onto (ride out) the down wrestler. If he escaped, he won; if Lear held on, Hinrichsen lost.

Hinrichsen chose the down position and managed to stand up, but Lear held him for the full 30 seconds – at the end lifting him off the mat to stop his escape – to win the district title.

"There is a real love/hate relationship between us," Lear said of Hinrichsen. "It's less love and more hate. But that just makes me better."

Lear said Hinrichsen is a really strong and good wrestler, but he doesn't like to give him much credit.

"At regions last year I beat him in the quarterfinals, and his mother told me I sucked," Lear said.

Lear (26-0) earned many quick pins throughout the season, but said he is in good enough condition to go the distance when needed.

"I guess that proves it," Lear said after his 8.5-minute match.

Regulation ends after 6 minutes.

"Wrestling is the hardest sport I can think of, but I'm in pretty good condition for a heavyweight – and I felt I wanted it more," Lear said.

First place at 112

Dickinson also had a tight match at 112.

The No.1 seed, Dickinson pinned Ronray Harris in 4:52 in the quarterfinals and then pinned Bill McMenamin of St. Augustine in 44 seconds in the semifinals.

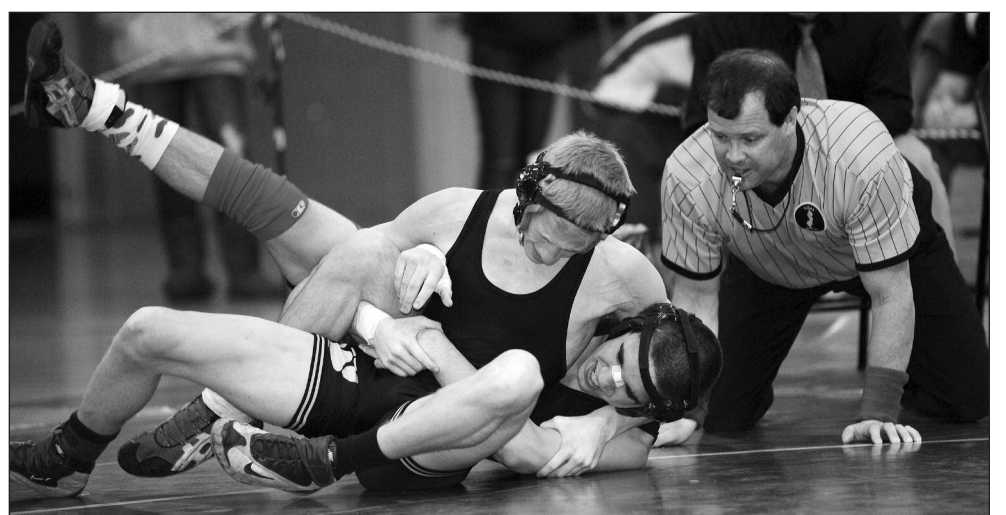
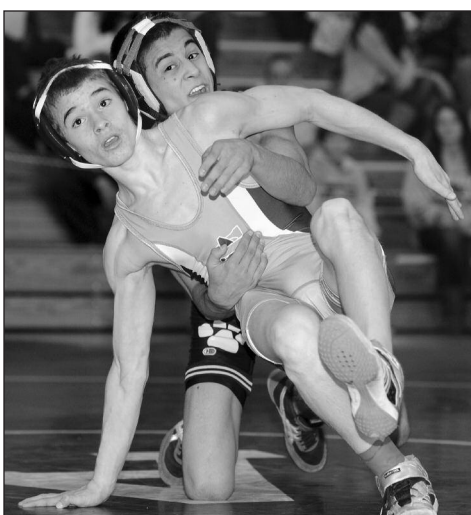
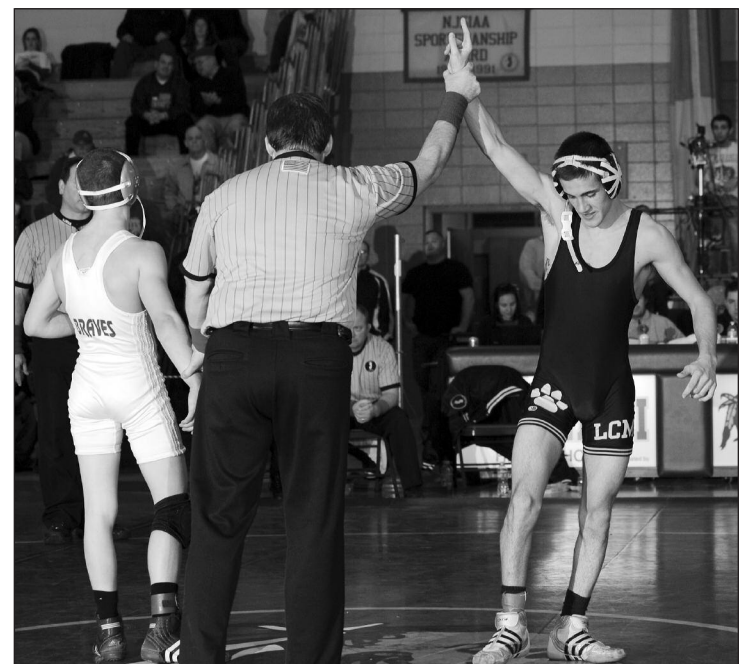
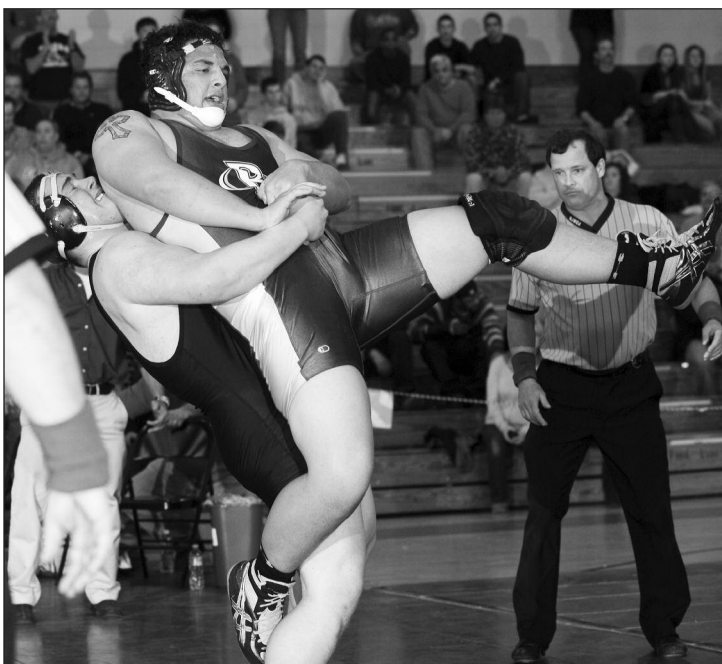
In the finals he faced Mike Jiampetti, the No. 2 seed, who major-decided Eric Hanusewicz of Oakcrest 15-6 and then pinned William

Please see **Champs**, page B8



David Nahan/Cape May Star and Wave

Dylan Gannon, above on right, battles with Mark Capetola of Egg Harbor Township in the 215-pound class. Gannon won 4-1 to take the district championship. Below left, Chaz Lear lifts Dom Hinrichsen of Buena in the 285-pound class to keep him from escaping in a rideout. Lear held on and took first place. Below right, the referee lifts Josh Dickinson's arm indicating he won first place in 112 pounds.



David Nahan/Cape May Star and Wave

Above left, Zach Valcarce wrestles Tom Gattinella in the 103-pound consolation match. Above right, Tyler DeShields battles with Mariano in the 140-pound consolation match. Both wrestlers ended up fourth in their class at the District 32 wrestling tournament. See more pictures on B8.

Caper Tigers clinch CAL National Conference title

By CHRISTOPHER SOUTH
Cape May Star and Wave

ERMA – Team USA beat Canada in men's hockey? Tiger Woods' public apology? Allen Iverson on indefinite leave from the Sixers? Forget about it!

All the excitement you need in sports these days is coming out of Lower Cape May Regional High School.

Following on the heels of three firsts at the District 32 wrestling tournament (see related story), the Caper Tigers boys basketball team clinched the Cape-Atlantic League National Conference title Monday with a 91-46 win over Sacred Heart.

There was little doubt Lower Cape May (19-3) would beat Sacred Heart (5-17), and the Caper Tigers put on a show in the first quarter 27-4 in a first quarter highlighted by Brandon Pascucci's 3-point shooting (he had 7, people), Tom McKeefrey's dunks and blocks, and Ernie Harper's drives and on-target outside shooting.

Pascucci and McKeefrey combined for 46 points (Sacred Heart's game total)

in two-and-a-half quarters. Pascucci had 26 points – 21 of which were from beyond the arc – and McKeefrey had 20 from much closer range.

In the early stages of the game, Harper seemed to also have the ball in his hand or taking it out of someone else's. Harper had 12 points from the field and shot 5 for 6 from the free throw line.

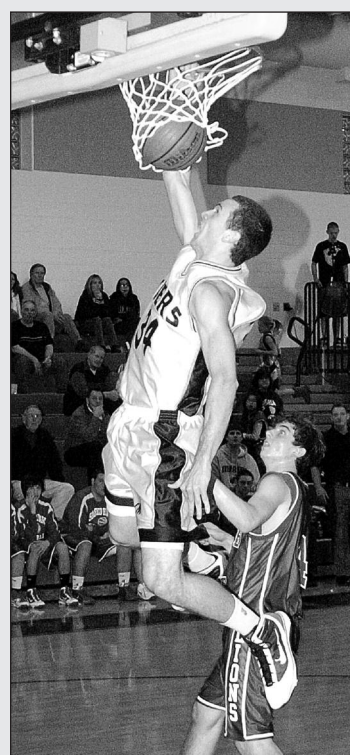
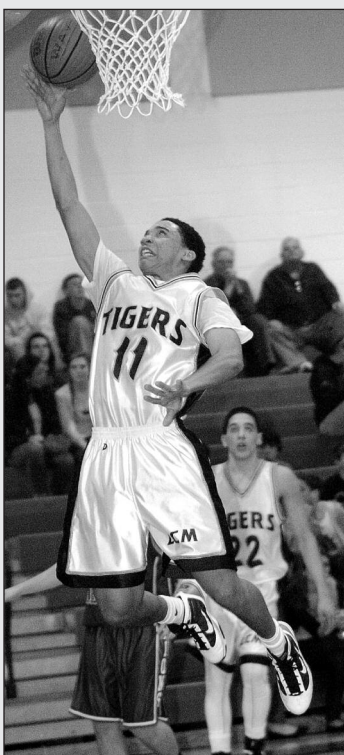
"My teammates were getting me the ball where I could score," Harper said. "We were like a family tonight."

Although individually, four Caper Tigers scored in double figures – the fourth being Vance Matthews with 12 – Harper said Lower Cape May tries to focus on defense.

"Defense creates offense," Harper said. "Offense wins the game, but defense wins championships."

Championships are what the team has been focusing on this season. Earlier in the season, head coach Pat Holden said his team was going to take a run at the CAL championship and the South Jersey Group III championship.

After Monday, the Caper Tigers earned the right to



Christopher South/Ocean City Sentinel

Above left, Ernie Harper scores an easy bucket. Above right, Tom McKeefrey dunks on Sacred Heart after a steal at half court.

play in the CAL championship, where they will meet Ocean City (17-6). The game

is at Egg Harbor Township High School on Saturday at 2 p.m.

"We want to keep following through with our goal and win the championship," Harper said.

On Monday, Pascucci started the scoring with a 3-pointer, and McKeefrey stole the ball back and scored. McKeefrey scored the next basket and Harper stole the ball back and dished it to Ryan Herman for a lay-up. Herman had 4 points, all in the first quarter.

Sacred Heart's DePalma sank a floater to start the Lions' scoring. McKeefrey responded by dunking the ball twice before a Sacred Heart timeout. After the timeout, McKeefrey stole the ball at half court, drove to the basket and dunked again.

The Lower defensive pressure continued to disrupt the Lions' offense. McKeefrey blocked their next shot attempt and Marvin Evans stole the ball twice. Sacred Heart's Sean Lent broke a 12-0 run by the Caper Tigers to make it 21-4, but the Caper Tigers extended their lead to 27-4. The only low point in the quarter for Lower Cape May was going 4 for 8 from the free throw line. (If you can call it a low point.)

However, the Caper Tigers shot 11 for 14 from the charity stripe in the second quarter, scoring 29 points as a team. Sacred Heart added 13 to their total, including a head's up put-back by the Lion's K. Lapsley. Lapsley's shot was blocked by McKeefrey, and he was able to recover the ball, drive to the basket and score. Pascucci responded by sinking a 3-pointer and Lower took a 56-17 lead into the half.

In the third quarter, Holden brought back his starting lineup with Matthews instead of Evans, who was icing his foot. After about half of the quarter expired, and with the score 72-29, Holden brought George Donaghy, George Moore and Bob O'Donnell into the game. By the fourth quarter, there were only subs and junior varsity players in the game for Lower Cape May. Moore scored 6 points in the final period, O'Donnell 3 and Shaq Lovelace on a 3-point shot.

Sacred Heart 4 13 18 11 – 46
Lower Cape 27 29 23 12 – 91