Reflections on the 2018 Maryland State Wrestling Championship
By Robert Yi

So nobody would have guessed that the wrestling season would end on a Monday night in March, but once again I'd say Montgomery County represented big time and finally came through with 2 non- Damascus state titles with Churchill's Jack Connolly and Northwest's Yonas Harris breaking through. I believe the last wrestler to win a state title not from Damascus was Churchill's Hunter Sutton (2014). Connolly versus Sanchez was also the first all MoCo final since Zeke Gammil vs. Reed Neubaum (2010).

Although there were couple of things that didn't work out for Damascus, 5 finalists (Emerick, McLaughlin, Lawrence, T. Furgeson, Baisden), with 2 champs (McLaughlin, Lawrence), and 2 more placers (J. Furgeson-4th, Lokos-3rd) capped off a dream season and possibly an era/dynasty.

I guess in year 3, Show Place is finally growing on me. Thanks to Baron Nation for letting me set up camp in your area for Day 1 and of course a special thank you goes out to Hall of Fame Inductee Tony Howard, for allowing me to celebrate your induction with your family and Bulldog Nation.

When you combine the success on the 3A/4A side along with Damascus's dominance (Carbonell and Savage's top 3 placements), MoCo had a placer at every weight and a finalist in 9 of 14 weights. There were 33 state placers overall and 13 (I believe) of them are underclassmen.

I want to give some personal acknowledgements to Gabe McAndrew (you've come a long way since your 10 under MSWA title) Kemper Stearns (2 time state placer, 2nd on Walter Johnson's Career Wins list, 6th state finalist in school history), Jacob Bernstein (becoming WJ's 7th finalist in school history), Nick Gonzalez (Second 2 time place winner in school history) and
Eli Guttentag (going 5th at counties, 5th at regionals, to 3rd @states is an amazing story of redemption).

106- The stories here were Yonas and Emerick. Northwest 's Yonas Harris dominated all year and continued that performance all through the state tourney. Although Harris was down 3-0 in his finals match with Clapsadle of Stephen Decatur, Harris would tie it at 3-3, and trade reversals to send it into OT, where he would win 7-5 with the winning takedown. Congratulations Mr. Harris.

Damascus's Michael Emerick pinned his way all the way to the finals before running into Owings Mills's Alex DuFour. Where he would give up the first takedown, get ball and chain stacked and eventually get pinned on a whizzer step over. Tough loss, but making the finals as a freshman is pretty impressive. Wootton's Jason Liau and BCC's Christian Simpson both fell in the blood round but are both underclassmen with huge future upsides.

113- Montgomery Counties best Alex Carbonell (Poolseville) kept it close in the semifinals before getting cradled up by Smithsburg's Shane Hovermale. Alex would wrestle back to take 3rd, 4-2 over Dunbar's Camerin Deville for his second trip to the podium. Northwest's Siavash Sarvestani lost his opening round match, only to win 3 straight (eeking out a 2-0 decision over Magruder's Wafeeq Iqbal in the blood round). Siavash would lead 5-4 heading into the 3rd period of his match for 5th place versus Barber of South River, but would give up the last 3 points of the match to finish 6th.

120- This was the classic case of where one wrestler has another wrestler's number at counties and regions but gets put on opposite sides of the bracket, and the wrestler who couldn't win in the previous weeks, gets through to the end. Case in point, Kemper Stearns of WJ, the county and regional runner up, defeated defending state champion Sean Vosburgh of Leonardtown to advance to the finals. Where as, Magruder's CJ Cramma lost his semifinals to the eventual champion, C. Milton Wright's James Riveira. Stearns's match with Vosburgh was unfortunately stopped due to a head/neck injury that was suffered by Vosburgh, not long after Stearns forced Vosburgh to his back. Vosburgh bridged out of the pin attempt and shot into Stearns and then crumpled onto the mat where he was subsequently immobilized and taken off by EMT's. The wrestling world wishes you and your family the best news possible. In the finals, Stearns took a reversal right to Riveira's back to what appeared to be a pin, but Riveira was saved by the buzzer at the end of the second period, 4-2. Riveira would tie it up at 4 and lock up a cradle for the go ahead backs and a 6-4 win. Congratulations Kemper on an incredible career.

But before all of this could even take place, there was a literal clash of the champions between defending 106 state champ Sean Vosburgh and 113 state champ Brent Lorin, who met in the quarters. Vosburgh took control early with a takedown and farside re-bar tilt, 4-0. Lorin would close the gap to 5-4 after a throw, but Vosburgh would lock up a cradle and a spladle for the pin. The crazy thing was that neither one of these 2 were even the slight favorite coming into the tourney. Einstein's Allan Vasquez reached the blood round before losing to Old Mills's Ryheam Tull. Vasquez is a junior.

126- Talk about MCPS owning a weight class: McLaughlin-1st, Bernstein-2nd, Guttentag-3rd, Echeona-4th, Madden-5th

Damascus's Johnny McLaughlin was masterful by pinning all the way through to the finals and capping it off with Damascus's first state championship of the night with a 7-2 victory over Eastern Tech's Ryan Wagener. WJ's Jacob Bernstein's meteoric rise to the finals has been astonishing considering he went two and out at regionals last year. He defeated QO's Jose Echeona in the semis for the second weekend in a row to become only the 7th (Rob Tannenbaum, Chris & Steve Gahl, Elad Covaliu, JD FitzPatrick, Kemper Stearns) WJ wrestler to reach the finals in school history. Jacob

gave Linganore's Earl Blake, a stiffer test this time around but still fell 13-6, to the now two time state champ.
But one of the best redemption stories of the tournament was BCC's Eli Guttentag coming back from not making states last year, placing 5th at counties and regionals, to making it back to the podium and becoming the school's 7th and 8th multi time state placer (along with McAndrew) for the Barons since Charlie Banaszak (2013). Eli avenged two previous losses to QO's Jose Echeona with a 6-2 decision in the 3rd place match. Springbrook's Billy Madden missed older brother Eddie's 5th place feat from 2011, by one place. Madden scored a reversal in the finals seconds versus Broadneck's Nick Schardt to send it to OT. Billy would lose by one point in the tiebreaker for 6th.

132- The county's rags to riches story of Bryan Huynh (Blair) ended with a happy ending, as last year's Jv county champ turned this year's varsity county champ, made it to the state podium and did so by beating Whitman's Clark Boinis in the blood round 8-3. Sherwood's Sam Ewing also made it to the blood round before being pinned by Huntingtown's Gavin Stoddard. Ewing is a junior.
Huynh ends up the county's lone representative on the medal stand, with an exciting OT pin of South River's Calvin Brumfield when he landed on top of Brumfield's takedown attempt for the stick.

138- The epic saga that was the 138 weight class concluded in an unbelievable fashion as Churchill's Jack Connolly defeated Sherwood's Chris Sanchez in OT sudden victory 6-4. This was by far the match of the night, which had the crowd on their feet reacting to all of the ups and downs of the match. Connolly exploded out of the gate with an early takedown but Sanchez would escape 2-1, and almost launch Connolly head over feet with a double elbow lock throw. Sanchez would tie it at 2-2 in the second period with another escape and proceeded to very nearly score two more takedowns on opposite edges of the mat. But both the slideby and bear hug finish attempts were ruled just out of bounds. But in the 3rd period, Sanchez would score 2 on a tilt to make it 4-2. But then came what would be the defining point in the match. Sanchez would collect 3 cautions on several re-starts from top, that lead to a point for Connolly, 4-3. This was the first time I had ever seen a wrestler give up a point on cautions in any kind of significant match. Especially from top. This gave Jack new life, as he would score an escape at the buzzer to send it to OT. Jack would duck a head arm attempt by Sanchez to win an incredible finals championship. Definitely shoots up there in one of the most memorable matches in recent memory. Congratulations to Jack (3 time state winner) and the Churchill Nation.

Connolly got there by pinning Clarksburg's Nick Gonzalez in the semis, while Sanchez rode out QO's Lopez 1-0 throughout the third period to set up his finals appearance. Lopez would get his second straight 3rd place at the state tourney with a dominant 15-5 decision over Gonzalez. For Gonzalez, he follows only Chris Williamson, as Clarksburg's only 2 time state place winner.
Reaching the podium for the second time in 2 years was Poolesville's Colin Savage, this time on the 2A/1A side. He finished 3rd with a pin over Rising Sun's Silas

Fillaux.

145- Damascus's Ryan Lawrence established himself pound for pound, as the county's best the last 2 years. With his 11-3 decision over Skyler Minutelli of Sparrow's Point on Monday, he became the county's first back to back champion winner (not counting Purkey's private school title and last year's title) since Mikey Macklin won 2 in a row during his sophomore and junior seasons. Who knows what would have happened if Jason Kraisser wouldn't have had blood time at just the right time vs. Ryan 2 years ago? Blair's Ryan Holland becomes the school's first 2 time state place winner, since .....Camilo Rincon (2001)?
with a 3-2 decision over Broadneck's Owen Joyce (can anyone stop Holland's fireman's dump?).

152- Damascus's John Allan Furgeson hopes of a state championship were abruptly dashed in the quarterfinals when Furgeson was scrambling with Owings Mills's Roell Ngounou and got himself caught for the pin. Somewhat of a surprise here, considering Furgeson had beaten Ngounou 20-10 at state duals. John Allan came back to face Ngounou one last time for 3rd/4th, but unfortunately the final result would play out the same again. Ngounou managed to hit 2 duck unders which would serve to be the difference in the match. That along with no back points being rewarded for John Allan's patented tilt attempt in the 2nd period, which could have made it interesting in the 7-4 loss. Paint Branch's Dhedus Anumgba and Sherwood's Ryth Gosh both came one round short of the medal ceremony, but it was even more heartbreaking for Anumgba, as he was tied 4-4 in the 3rd period of his quarterfinal with eventual finalist Robbie Fleming of Old Mill. He would give up a takedown late and fell short 6-5.

160- Damascus's Tim Furgeson would have some better fortunes than his older brother, with a go behind takedown, 3-1 in OT versus Southern's Josh Merkle in the quarters and a more convincing 11-2 win over Marriott Ridge's Justin Hooper in the semis, when he caught him feet to backs in the third period that landed him in his first finals. But Timmy would fall just short of his first championship 4-2, to two time state champ Trevor Bauer of North Caroline. Another MoCo wrestler who fell just short of a win to Trevor Bauer, was Poolesville's Xavier Kresslein, who lost 3-2 in the ultimate tiebreaker, as he gave up a reversal. Unfortunately, Xavier would lose 11-2 in the blood round to Catoctin's Josh Small. Springbrook's Sahid Antar beat Sherwood's Adam Pfeiffer for the second time in this postseason, but this time it was in the pivotal blood round, joining him with teammate Billy Madden on the podium. He punctuated his 5th place finish with a 3rd period pin of Tuscarora's Alex Westbrook.

170- Damascus's Ben Lokos was winning 6-3 after he had Southern Garrett's Joe Embleton on his back in the 3rd period of his semifinal match. But Lokos would give up an escape and a takedown in the closing seconds of the 3rd period to tie it at 6. Embleton would score another takedown early in OT, for a trip to the finals and an eventual state title. Lokos would wrestle back to secure his second 3rd place in three

years, with a 3-2 win in the second tiebreaker over Liberty's Jake Griffin. This was a little measure of revenge from last week's regional loss. Another heartbreaking ending, occurred for Northwest's Luke Patterson, as he had to injury default to eventual champ Tristan Breen of Huntingtown in the semifinals. But Patterson would end his career on a positive note with a 6-0 win over Northern Calvert's Drew Fleming, for 5th place.

182- BCC's Gabriel McAndrew hit an inside trip from a front headlock versus Clarksburg's Drew Brenowitz in the semifinals to win 3-2 and close out their 4 match saga, which landed Gabe into the finals with a regional finals rematch versus North Hagerstown's Aaron Brooks. But the story of all MoCo underdogs may have come from QO's Ryan Jones, who knocked off region champ Jason Smith of Old Mill, 10-1, and Blair's Leo West 11-5, to advance to the semifinals. After losing to Brooks in the semis, Jones would beat Cram of Huntingtown, before finally falling to Clarksburg's Brenowitz for the third time in 3 weeks, in the 3rd/4th place match. Jones's defensive style earned him the first takedown versus Brenowitz, but eventually worked against him when he got hit for a second stall call that led to Brenowitz's 6-5 win.

195- An occurrence that actually stemmed from last week's regionals was that Damascus's Paul Purkey sustained a concussion in his match with Middletown's Cam Farrow. Unbeknownst to many, Paul attempted to give it go this week but ended up defaulting in the first round to Hereford's Will Blake. Sorry to hear that your amazing high school career did not end with your 3rd state title. Which leads me to ponder, who is considered Damascus's greatest wrestler? Mikey Macklin? Scotty Obendorfer? Ryan Lawrence? Or Paul Purkey?

On the 4A/3A side, Churchill's Andrew Welch was on the wrong side of a takedown on the edge call versus Poly's Melvin Crawford that sent Welch into the consis that lead him on a collision course with fellow MoCo resident Austin Smith of Paint Branch. Smith, who lost his quarterfinal match as well, worked his way back through the consis for an all MoCo 3rd/4th match. Smith got by Whitman's Yussef Zaki, 5-4 in the blood round. In the 3rd place match, Welch would score a reversal versus Smith late in the third period to go up a point, and Smith would try to roll out of it but got stuck for the pin. Both Smith and Zaki are juniors, as is Brenowitz of Clarksburg, making 195 potentially loaded again.

220- This weight class was loaded with athletes, specimens, and technical wrestlers, but Whitman's John-Luke Iglesias was just too much of everything. He put it all together with a run to the finals, beating the #3 (Solomon of Franklin) and #2 (Bourne of Stephen Decatur) ranked wrestlers in the process. In the finals, Iglesias stopped a shot attempt from C. Milton Wright's Wyatt Graham, with a whizzer counter move that brought Graham to the mat (for two), but stayed side to side. Graham would hip over and put Iglesias on his back for the pivotal near fall. Iglesias would manage to lock up a cradle later in the 2nd period, but did so on his hip, that

led to him pulling Graham on top of him for the eventual pin. Along with Iglesias, Blair's Rudy Ngougni joined him in on the podium with 3 pins. The first two came on his way to the semis, and the last came versus last year's state placer Shawn King-Pombo of South Hagerstown, for 5th place.

Hwt- Damascus's 5th and final finalist, Elijah Baisden had the unfortunate task of taking on Dunbar's Jorden Pryor, who is possibly the best combination of size and athleticism our state has seen in sometime. Pryor scored takedowns with a head and back of the knee pick, several times. It was pretty much a takedown/escape contest for most of the 11-5 match. And the scary thing about Pryor is that he is a junior, so we could see a replay of this final next year (don't remember when the state has had a back to back hwt champ, let alone a rematch between two heavyweights). Hopefully Elijah can figure something out by next year (or maybe Pryor will take his talents to private). On another note, who would have thought that in ultimate rideout, you could just drop to above the knee, turn your hips and face up Churchill's Alec Velikanov and drive him out of bounds and put him on his back repeatedly so that he could not get the 1? Well, Edgewood's Daviyon Johnson thought so. And unfortunately it took Velikanov out of a shot at the podium and into the conso rounds where he would lose a 3-1 match to Paint Branch's Waefu Foundjing in the next round. Unfortunately for Foundjing, he had the misfortune of facing returning state placer, Roosevelt's Christian Bryant in the blood round, who beat him 7-2. Look out for Alec and Waefu, as they are both juniors.