

# Butler Eagle



**2022-23**

**BUTLER**

**WRESTLING**

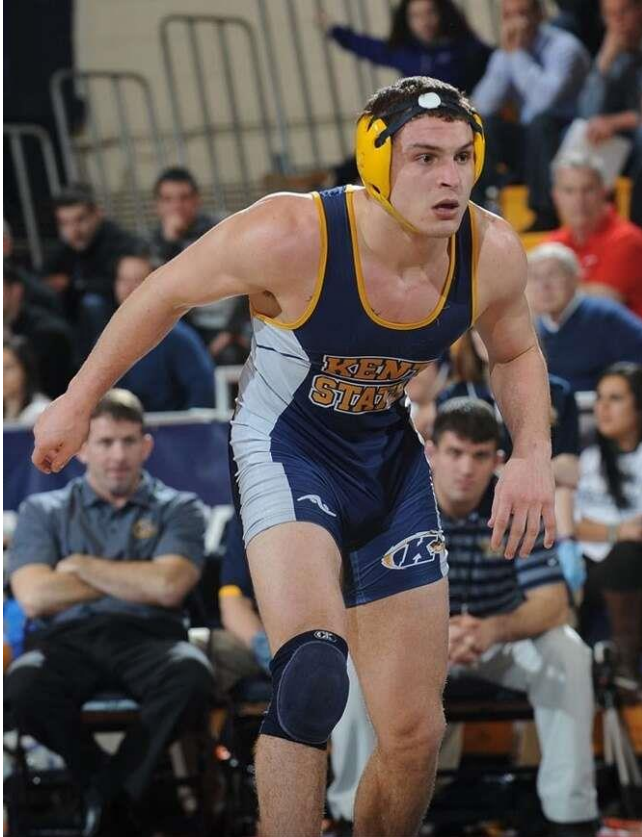
**PRESS RELEASES**

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## Mat legacy winds up in HOF

### Butler's Baxter set numerous Golden Tornado wrestling records

John Enrietto - Eagle Sports Editor - September 19, 2022



Butler graduate and Golden Tornado wrestling legend Cole Baxter is being inducted into the Butler County Sports Hall of Fame. Submitted Photo

*This is the 11th in a series of articles profiling the 2022 Butler County Sports Hall of Fame inductees*

BUTLER TWP — When it came to trying to figure out when his wrestling career turned the corner, Cole Baxter drew a blank. “I guess I was always pretty good,” the 2011 Butler graduate said.

He was great, actually — great enough to gain induction into the Butler County Sports Hall of Fame. Baxter and 12 other individuals will be inducted during the organization’s annual banquet at 6 p.m. Saturday at the Lyndora American Legion hall.

The first WPIAL wrestling champion in Butler history, Baxter compiled a 160-17 career record with the Golden Tornado. He has the most wins in program history and ranks 10th in WPIAL history in total victories. He was a four-time

WPIAL qualifier and three-time finalist. He placed twice in the state tournament, finishing fourth and fifth, respectively.

“I never won a state championship and was never a four-time WPIAL champion, but it wasn’t for a lack of trying,” Baxter said. “I have no regrets about anything in my career. I gave my best every time I went on the mat.” Baxter placed fourth in the country at the National High School Coaches Association Junior Nationals in 2010. He also made the state’s All-Academic team that year. Among Baxter’s other Butler wrestling records are 45 single-season wins, 86 career pins, best won-loss percentage (45-2) in a season and career, and 26 pins in one season.

“My parents started me out in wrestling when I was very young,” Baxter said. “No one else in my family had wrestled before. I vaguely remember being taken to Northwestern (University) to watch my cousin (Josh Saul) wrestle. “The sport became a common part of my life. Every winter, it was off to wrestling practice.”

An outside linebacker and running back at Butler for three years, Baxter was football team MVP in 2010. He also competed in the javelin and ran on a relay for the track team his senior year.

He continued his stellar wrestling career at Kent State University, where he won 85 matches in his career. During his freshman season with the Golden Flashes, Baxter was 23-4 with eight pins and three wins by technical fall. He won the Brockport/Oklahoma Invitational and the Cleveland State Open at 197 pounds his senior year. "Kent State was the best fit for me and they offered me a scholarship, which was a big help financially," Baxter said. "I loved my teammates. A few of those guys were in my wedding."

Now living in Mt. Lebanon, Baxter helps out as an assistant wrestling coach with the Blue Devils. "This (Hall of Fame induction) caught me completely by surprise," Baxter said. "My competitive career is long over, but it's important to be recognized for things you've done in life. I'm very appreciative of that. "I have an aunt (Lisa Zitalone) in the Hall of Fame and my uncles (Bill, Rich and Ron Saul) are in there, so I feel like I'm carrying on that tradition for my family. Hopefully, others will be following me.

"This honor isn't all about me, though. Guys like (Butler wrestling coaches) Scott Stoner, Bill Mylan, others who helped me along the way ... It's about them, too," Baxter added.

## Butler Eagle

# Stoner's numbers on the rise

Longtime Tornado wrestling coach joining Butler Athletic Hall of Fame

[John Enrietto - Eagle Sports Editor - November 30, 2022](#)



Butler wrestling head coach Scott Stoner yells instructions during a match in the Butler Intermediate School gym. Butler Eagle File Photo  
This is the second in a series of articles profiling the 2022 inductees into the Butler Area School District Athletic Hall of Fame

BUTLER TWP — Art Bernardi, Paul Uram, Steve Heasley, Dave Barnes, Mike Seybert, Dave McKinnis ... Butler wrestling coach Scott Stoner sees a common trait among them all. "Burning passion and dedication to their sport,"

Stoner said. "I feel like I'm that way about wrestling."

Stoner will soon have something else in common with that list of men — a place in the Butler Area School District Athletic Hall of Fame. He will be inducted during a reception at 6 p.m. Dec. 16 in the high school cafeteria. His most productive wrestler ever, Cole Baxter, will be inducted that night as well. "I'm very happy this is working out that way," Stoner said. "I'm hoping my plaque goes up right next to his. I would love to see that."

Stoner took over as Golden Tornado mat coach in 1993-94, the program's third year of existence. Butler was 0-11 the previous season. A graduate of Slippery Rock University's wrestling program, Stoner told the kids the team would win at least half of its dual matches in his debut season. "A lot of the kids laughed and that was understandable," he said. "If they were still laughing at the end of that season, I didn't deserve to be their coach. That's how I felt about it. "We wound up going 14-11 that first year. That's where it all started."

The 2022-23 season will be Stoner's 30th as Butler wrestling coach. His career record in dual matches is 415-205. He's endured only five losing seasons, the last being a 7-14 mark in 2006-07. Stoner's career has produced 35 individual section champions, though he's never won a section crown as a team. "That one's eluded me," he said. "There are some veteran coaches who have won WPIAL championships and I'm still trying to win the section. But the WPIAL is the most competitive high school wrestling conference in the country. I truly believe that. "If you look at the NCAA Wrestling Championships, Pennsylvania sends around 50 wrestlers every year. The next state in line sends 27 or 28. We go up against the best right here."

Stoner ranks No. 1 among active WPIAL wrestling coaches with his 412 wins. He was named WPIAL Coach of the Year in 2021-22, guiding the Tornado to a 19-4 record. Only in his 50's, he figures to coach for at least a few more years yet. "There are guys ahead of me (on the WPIAL all-time win list) like Chuck Tursky of Kiski Area, Tom Dolde Sr. of Connellsville. They are also SRU guys. Chuck has 504 wins. I don't know if I'll get there or not.

"The wins aren't what it's about for me. It's about working with kids, teaching them the sport. I put in as much time with the kids who are just learning as I do with our championship caliber kids. They all deserve the same amount of attention." Stoner has coached 205 WPIAL qualifiers, two WPIAL champions, 11 state qualifiers and three state place-winners in his career. He is a full-time teacher at Butler.

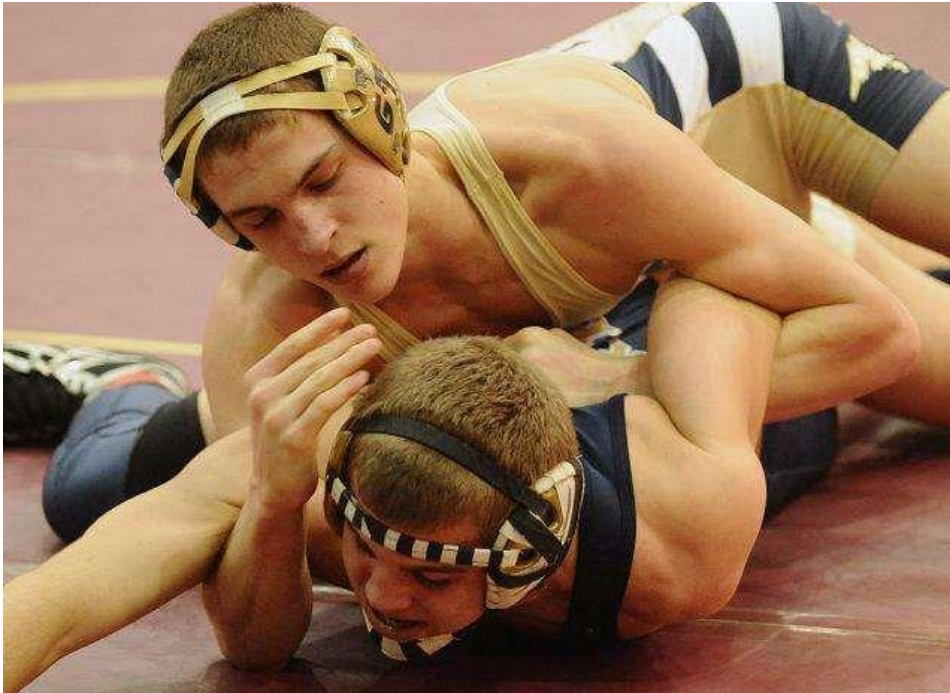
He was nominated for the Hall of Fame by Sandra Baxter, who stated: "Coach Stoner does more than coach athletes. He teaches his wrestlers responsibility, accountability, and a work ethic. He instills in his athletes life skills needed to succeed in today's world."

"If we're successful, wins accumulate," Stoner said. "But we're always striving to be better."

## PINNING DOWN HIS LEGACY

Wrestling legend Baxter joining Butler Area School District Athletic Hall of Fame

John Enrietto - Eagle Sports Editor - December 09, 2022



Butler's Cole Baxter takes control of Kiski Area's Justin Harold during a WPIAL Tournament match. Butler's all-time wrestling wins and pins leader is being inducted into the Butler Area School District Athletic Hall of Fame Dec. 16. Butler Eagle File Photo

BUTLER TWP — Cole Baxter was introduced to wrestling at a very young age — so young that he barely remembers it. “My cousin, Josh Saul, wrestled for Northwestern and my family went to see him compete in Ohio,”

Baxter said. “I was just a little kid. I didn’t understand the sport very much.

“Honestly, I’m not sure how I got started in wrestling. I guess my parents tossed me into it in elementary school. It’s a great activity for small kids to get involved with. It helps develop motor skills. “In terms of dedication, wrestling’s not for everybody. It definitely was for me,” Baxter added.

He became the Golden Tornado’s first WPIAL wrestling champion and set numerous program records before going on to wrestle at Kent State University. Baxter will be one of four inducted into the Butler Area School District Athletic Hall of Fame during a 6 p.m. ceremony in the high school cafeteria Dec. 16. Veteran Butler wrestling coach Scott Stoner is one of the other inductees.

“Almost everything I’ve learned in wrestling, most of my accomplishments in the sport, it’s because of Coach Stoner,” Baxter said. “He’s been a tremendous influence in my life.” And Baxter had a tremendous impact on the Butler wrestling program.

“His desire and passion toward the sport are things you can’t teach,” Stoner said. “When Cole took the mat, he didn’t just want to win. He wanted to dominate. He wanted to show everybody

he was the best wrestler in the gym that night. “His competitiveness was one of his biggest assets.”

The 2011 Butler graduate compiled a 160-17 career record with the Tornado. He was a three-time team captain and four-time WPIAL qualifier. He won the WPIAL championship in 2009. “The WPIAL is the best (high school) wrestling district in the country,” Baxter said. “I’m proud to be the first Butler wrestler to win a WPIAL title. I wish I could have won more. But records are made to be broken. Others will come along.” Baxter’s 45-4 record his senior year marked the most single-season victories in Butler history. He was a three-time section champion, three-time WPIAL finalist and three-time state qualifier. He also owns the program record for pins in a season (26) and career (86). Baxter was named Outstanding Wrestler at Butler three successive years. He compiled a 52-34 record at Kent State, including a pair of 20-win seasons.

“I never lost sight of the fact that wrestling is a team sport, too,” Baxter said. “The most points you can get in a match is six and that’s by pinning your opponent. Pins were important to me because I wanted to help our team score as much as I could.” Besides wrestling in high school, Baxter was a three-year letterman in football as an outside linebacker and running back. He lettered in track and field as well, running the 4x100 relay and throwing the javelin.

Now working in medical sales and living in Mt. Lebanon, Baxter is helping the Mt. Lebanon wrestling program as an assistant coach. He was inducted into the Butler County Sports Hall of Fame in September. “It’s nice being recognized for your accomplishments,” Baxter said. “I always enjoyed walking into our high school gym and seeing all of the Hall of Fame pictures and plaques on the wall. “Knowing I’m going to be a part of that means a lot to me.”

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## Girls wrestling coming on strong



### High school rosters seeing increase in female numbers

John Enrietto - Eagle Sports Editor -  
December 13, 2022

Butler wrestler Ana Malovich scores a takedown during a national girls tournament last summer. The number of girls wrestling for Butler County high schools is increasing dramatically. Submitted Photo7/21/22

Wrestling isn’t just a guy thing anymore in Pennsylvania. There are now 85 high schools in the Keystone State with sanctioned girls wrestling programs. When that number reaches 100, the PIAA will sanction girls wrestling as an official high school

sport. "That day is coming sooner rather than later," Seneca Valley coach Kevin Wildrick said. "We were the 58th school in the state to add a girls team and that was only a few months ago. It seems two or three girls teams are getting started every couple of weeks."

Seneca Valley is the first and only high school wrestling program in Butler County to form a girls team. The Raiders have 18 girls wrestling in grades 9-12 this season. Another eight are competing at the junior high level, 12 others in the youth program. Six girls are also listed on the Raiders' boys roster, including senior Madison Cardinal, SV's starting 107-pounder. "Some of these girls are doing double-duty between the girls and boys teams right now," Wildrick said. "Once the girls schedule kicks in, that will be much harder to do."

Knoch has four girls — junior Hannah Klemm, sophomores Miranda LaJevic and Amelia Crosby, freshman Braylee Ireland — in its starting lineup. Slippery Rock has senior Lexi Doerflinger, off to a 6-0 start at 107 pounds, wrestling for the boys varsity team. "Lexi was second in the women's state tournament last year," Slippery Rock coach Denton Zeronas said. "She didn't come out for our team her freshman or sophomore year, but decided to join us last season. "She's an outstanding wrestler, very dedicated to the sport. I think there would be many more like her if the girls knew they could wrestle against other girls in high school. I'm excited about this movement. It's all about growing the sport" Wildrick agreed.

"With the martial arts movement in recent years, athletes of both genders have become interested in the cross-over to sports with similar skills, including wrestling," he said. "But as the girls get older, wrestling against guys starts to feel awkward and difficult for a lot of them. They leave the sport as a result. "There has to be a girls wrestling program in place to draw them in, to keep them going. Having the opportunity to wrestle other girls in high school would keep a lot more of them in the sport."

Slippery Rock has five to 10 girls wrestling in its youth program. Butler has a significant number as well and has two on its varsity roster: Ana Malovich, a junior 114-pounder who has been involved in wrestling since elementary school, and sophomore Kaitlynn Plopi, whose older brother Aiden is a senior on the Golden Tornado team. "Aiden told me Kaitlynn was coming out for the team this year and I think that's great," Butler coach Scott Stoner said. "Opportunities are out there for female wrestlers. They shouldn't be denied the sport."

"I want to see us form a girls team. It's going to happen in a year or so. It has to be structured properly. I'd like the teams to practice together, though the girls would have their own (match) schedule. One of our current assistants would likely become head coach and we would properly staff it."

Butler hosted its annual Doc Phillips junior varsity tournament over the weekend. The 22-school tournament featured 50 female wrestlers and a female division for the first time. Connellsville, Canon-McMillan and Hempfield all had 12 to 14 female wrestlers competing. "The girls battled every bit as hard as the guys," Stoner said. "Momentum would take them off the mat and they'd hit the gym floor hard at times. The girls would bounce right up and get back to the center of the mat to resume the match. "I was impressed. They were into it. The physicality didn't bother them in the least. They want to compete."

First-year Knoch coach JD Orris described the girls on his team as "some of the hardest workers on the mat. They take criticism well. They're willing to learn." Orris said there are four more girls on the Knights' junior high team. "The numbers are growing locally and throughout the state," Orris said.

Wildrick isn't surprised by the growth of female wrestling across the Commonwealth. "A lot of other states in the country have had high school (girls) programs in place for a while now," the SV coach said. "Pennsylvania has been behind in that regard, but we're catching up."

"I've always felt that if girls see an opportunity to compete in wrestling in high school, that they would come. Well ... they're coming."

# Butler Eagle

## Balancing act at Butler

### Golden Tornado returning ample veteran wrestlers to mat this winter

John Enrietto - Eagle Sports Editor - December 15, 2022



Butler wrestler Levi Donnel is tied up by West Allegheny wrestler Ty Walters in the Section 3-AAA wrestling finals last season. Donnel, now a senior, is coming off a 33-5 season.

**BUTLER TWP** — When Scott Stoner says he has one of the most balanced lineups he's ever had, everyone's ears should perk up. After all, Stoner is entering his 30th season at the helm of the Butler wrestling program and sports a 412-185 career record in dual matches, including 19-4 last year. "We should be a pretty good dual match

team this year, too," Stoner said. "We bring back a lot of guys and there's versatility in our lineup. We can move people around."

The Golden Tornado began the season on a positive note, repeating as overall champion at the 34-team Chartiers Houston tournament. Santino Sloboda, a freshman at 107 pounds, won all five of his matches at that event as Butler's lone individual champion. Sloboda joins a veteran lineup that features eight returning 20-plus win wrestlers, including a pair who won more than 30 matches a year ago.

"Santino has an uncanny knack at figuring out his opponent and winning matches," Stoner said. "Sometimes it looks like he's going against the book, how I want our kids to wrestle, but it works out for him. "He's one of those kids who thinks on his feet during a match. I have to let him do his own thing in that regard."

Other top returners for Butler are seniors Landon Christie (22-11) at 215 pounds, Levi Donnel (33-5) at 160, Mickey Kreinbucher (32-11) at 189 and Matthew Zinkhann (27-14) at 172, juniors



Ana Malovich (23-12) at 114 and Kelley Schaukowitz (22-14) at 127, and sophomore Kase Chopp (24-13) at 139.

“Ethan Babay is off to a 7-2 start at heavyweight for us and could have a big year,” Stoner said. “We’re in some tougher tournaments this year. Our kids will be challenged by the competition and we’re excited about this season.”

# Butler Eagle

## Butler Athletic Hall of Fame Adds to Legacy

Snyder, Snodgrass, Baxter, Stoner inducted during Friday ceremony

John Enrietto - Eagle Sports Editor - December 19, 2022



2022 Butler Area School District Athletic Hall of Fame inductees, from left, Danica Snyder Alexander, Nate Snodgrass, Cole Baxter and Scott Stoner share a moment following Friday night's induction ceremony in the high school cafeteria.

BUTLER TWP — The 12th Butler Area School District Athletic Hall of Fame induction class proved similar to the previous 11 — humbled, excited and appreciated.

Danica Snyder Alexander, Nate Snodgrass, Cole

Baxter and wrestling coach Scott Stoner officially joined the Hall of Fame during Friday night's induction ceremony in the high school cafeteria.

A moment of silence for the late Art Bernardi — a long-time Golden Tornado football coach and one of the Hall's founders — preceded the inductions. “The records these athletes and coaches have created will inspire and motivate future generations,” said Brian Slamecka, chairperson of the Hall of Fame. “We are all grateful for that.”

Snyder, a 2011 Butler graduate, was a standout cross country and track and field distance runner. She set Tornado records in the 1,600 and 3,200 meters, ran a leg of the school record-setting 3,200-meter relay and was MVP of the cross country team. She set records and was part of consecutive Atlantic 10 cross country championship teams at Duquesne University as well. “The work ethic and commitment instilled in me here still exist in me today.”

Baxter is Butler's all-time wrestling wins leader, posting a 160-17 record with the Golden Tornado. He was the Golden Tornado's first WPIAL champion and went on to a successful mat career at Kent State University. "My parents talked Coach Stoner into letting me join the elementary (wrestling) program a year early," Baxter said. "That head start helped me a lot in my early years."

"In college, my parents showed up for all of my matches, whether it was at Ohio State on a Wednesday, Virginia Tech on a Friday ... They would travel for hours just to watch me wrestle for a few minutes."

Snodgrass did more than score 1,132 points as a Butler point guard in basketball, helping to trigger a run of success the basketball program continues to enjoy. He was valedictorian of his 2012 graduating class. A four-year letterman and two-time team MVP at Butler, Snodgrass went on to play college basketball at Northern Kentucky and Pitt-Johnstown.

"I was fortunate to play with outstanding teammates in high school," he said. "Vinnie Schmidt, Bobby Swartwout, Cody West, Cody Herald ... All I had to do was get them the ball so they could score. They made my job really easy."

"Having my picture and plaque go up by the gym where I always played ... I can't describe what that means to me," Snodgrass added.

Stoner is in his 30th year as Butler wrestling coach. His 412 wins entering this season ranked first among active WPIAL coaches. He's coached 35 section champions, 205 WPIAL qualifiers and 11 PIAA qualifiers. "Coach Stoner has always emphasized work ethic, fitness, health and wellness, and proper decision making," Slamecka said.

Stoner described his own wrestling career, saying he "has the same passion about it now" as he did as an eighth-grade wrestler. "I started wrestling in eighth grade and went 1-16 while teammates were winning 25 or 30 matches," Stoner said. "The struggles made me work harder. In ninth grade, I won the section."

"I went to Slippery Rock University and was eighth on the depth chart. I eventually became a starter and competed in the medal round at Division 1 Nationals my senior year. I've never been afraid of hard work. I try to instill that attitude in our wrestlers."

Stoner recruits potential wrestlers out of gym class at times. He pulled current junior high coach Don Geibel into the sport that way. "I remember Donnie saying he's a basketball player," Stoner said. "I said, 'You're 4'-7"! "I've always been grateful for the opportunity here. This district has given me my family, my home, my wife, my boys. I reflect on our hard work in this wrestling program and I feel like we can do much more." Stoner became the 11th coach/supporter to be inducted into the Hall of Fame. There are now 58 athletes inducted as well.

# Trib HSSN wrestling rankings for Dec. 20, 2022

By: [Paul Schofield](#) Tuesday, December 20, 2022 | 4:45 PM



Christopher Horner | Tribune-Review

Burrell's Luke Boylan hushes the crowd after pinning Kiski Area's Donavin Harbison at 215 pounds during their match on Wednesday, Dec. 14, 2022, at Kiski Area High School

## Class 3A team rankings

Pos. Team Record Prev.

1. [Trinity](#) (3-0) 4
2. [Butler](#) (6-0) NR
3. Waynesburg (5-1) 1
4. [Connellsville](#) (1-0) 3
5. [Canon-McMillan](#) (0-1) 2
6. [Latrobe](#) (2-1) 5
7. [Franklin Regional](#) (3-0) 6
8. [Hempfield](#) (4-1) 8
9. [Seneca Valley](#) (4-1) 9
10. [Plum](#) (4-1) 10

Teams to watch: [Armstrong](#), [Bethel Park](#), [Norwin](#). Dropped out: [North Allegheny](#) (7).



## Butler wrestlers win Kiski Duals

December 19, 2022 10:54 PM High School

Expect anything. That was Butler wrestling coach Scott Stoner's mind-set entering the prestigious Kiski Duals Saturday.

"I figured we could go 5-0, 0-5, or somewhere in between," Stoner said. I usually don't want to start the season with this type of test. This year the PIAA started the season with only two weeks of time leading up to the first competition. Typically, we have 3 weeks to prepare. I like to slowly develop the team over the season. With many lesser experienced wrestlers in the line-up, I take a slower approach with more preparation to competing against the top-level teams. All five of these teams were in the top 15 in the WPIAL's AAA division which includes 44 teams. Wrestling has only AA and AAA in its classification system.

"We had some close matches, which I knew would happen. "It turned out to be one of the best days in the history of our program." I was very excited about our performance in the 4 matches leading up to the victory over WPIAL AAA #1 Waynesburg. I felt our kids met equal or higher-level head to head competition throughout those first 4 matches. Today we won the large majority or competed tightly in those matches. That's a great place to be this early. Our victory over Waynesburg in the finals was Waynesburg's first loss in 4 years to a WPIAL team. It capped a great day of wrestling for our team and program.

The Golden Tornado won the Kiski Duals, going 5-0. Competing in Pool A of the 10-team event, Butler defeated Penn-Trafford 49-20, Peters Township 39-32, Hempfield 42-30 and Kiski Area 39-32.

## High school wrestling notebook: Butler ends Waynesburg's winning streak at 42

By: [Paul Schofield](#) Tuesday, December 20, 2022 | 6:34 PM



Butler's Kase Chopp beats Latrobe's Jacob Braun in the 126-pound bout during the WPIAL Class 3A team quarterfinals last season.

When [Butler](#) defeated Waynesburg, 40-32, in wrestling Saturday, it was the Raiders' first loss to a WPIAL team in 42 matches. The Golden Tornado have been on the brink of reaching the WPIAL elite in recent years, and winning the [Kiski Area](#) Duals launched them to a new level.

[Trinity](#) (3-0) jumped to the top spot in the Trib HSSN rankings in Class 3A and [Butler](#) (6-0) to No. 2. Waynesburg (5-1) dropped to No. 3. [It was followed by No. 4 Connellsville \(1-0\), No. 5 Canon-McMillan \(0-1\), No. 6 Latrobe \(3-1\), No.](#)

[7 Franklin Rgional \(3-0\) and No. 8 Hempfield \(4-1\).](#)



## Butler rides big early lead to win over SV

### Golden Tornado wrestlers collect 4 pins in 39-21 victory

John Enrietto - Eagle Sports Editor - December 22



Butler's Levi Donnel looks up towards the scoreboard near the end of his 10-2 major decision over Corey Wolfe of Seneca Valley on Wednesday night.

BUTLER TWP — The 30-0 lead did not surprise Butler wrestling coach Scott Stoner. In fact, he thought it could have been more. "I was hoping for a 30-0 lead before Santino (Sloboda's match at 107 pounds)," Stoner said. "When we got the pins at 215 and 285 ... yeah, I felt like we could have gotten a few more points during that opening stretch." Sloboda pinned his opponent to get Butler's lead to 30-0 and the Golden Tornado went on

to a 39-21 dual match win over Seneca Valley in the Intermediate High School gym.

The Tornado (7-0) began the match with three successive major decisions, followed by pins from Landon Christie, Ethan Babay and Sloboda. "It wasn't a good starting spot for us," Seneca Valley coach Kevin Wildrick said. "But when you lose 39-21, there is no good starting spot."



Butler graduate Cole Baxter and head wrestling coach Scott Stoner were recognized for their recent Butler Area School District Athletic Hall of Fame inductions prior to Wednesday night's match with Seneca Valley. From left are Butler 100-win wrestler T.J. McCance, Baxter, Stoner and Butler athletic director Bill Mylan. Shane Potter/Butler Eagle 12/21/22

Levi Donnel, Matt Zinkhann and Mickey Kreinbacher scored the major decisions for Butler to begin the match. Babay's pin came against previously unbeaten Roman Royal (5-0) at heavyweight. Babay improved to 9-5 on the season with all but one of his wins coming

by pin-fall.

“Ethan is very athletic. He’s a heavyweight who can scramble,” Stoner said. “It looked like their kid had him dead to rights and he scrambled out of it. That’s a major plus for him. “He’s had to wait his turn behind Jake (Pomykata) and Ethan learned a lot from him. He’s putting that knowledge to good use. He’s pretty aggressive on the mat.”

Babay said he used an inside bar to pin Royal to the mat. “I’ve been working on that move,” Babay said. “In practices, I keep drilling it and drilling it. I felt I could make it work tonight, so I kept trying it. I finally got him to turn. That pin felt pretty good. “When you see some of your teammates get pins and put together a string of wins like we did tonight, it definitely helps me. I just wanted to keep that string rolling. I was fired up to go out there and try to get a pin for the team.” Butler’s other pin came from Kase Chopp (9-3) at 139 pounds. He built a 16-4 lead through two periods before securing the pin at 4:23.

“We did well in spots, but Seneca Valley has a young team and I thought we’d come out with a little more arrogance tonight. I don’t feel like I saw enough of that,” Stoner said. “Levi won by major decision, but he kept trying a tilt and it wasn’t working. You have to recognize that on the mat and try something else. That’s just one example.” Sloboda, a freshman, is off to an 11-0 start this season with six pins.

The Raiders (4-2) received pins from Connor Smith at 114 pounds and Tyler Chappell at 127. They improved to 8-2 and 10-2, respectively, on the season. “Those guys are our leaders and they always come out ready,” Wildrick said. “We’re a young team and Butler has a lot more experience. You can’t give up bonus points in a dual like this and we have up way too many bonus points early.” Seneca Valley will compete in the Powerade Tournament at Canon-McMillan during the Christmas break. Butler will participate in the 35-team Southmoreland Tournament Dec. 27-28.

## **BUTLER 39, SENECA VALLEY 21**

### **(match started at 160 pounds)**

107-Santino Sloboda (B) pinned Hunter Tillotson, 1:25; 114-Connor Smith (SV) pinned Ana Malovich, 3:45; 121-Kelley Schaukowitsch (B) dec., Jack Tofanelli, 4-3; 127-Tyler Chappell (SV) pinned Leo Iarrapino, 2:26; 133-Zach Hill (SV) dec. Gavin Rush, 4-2; 139-Kase Chopp (B) pinned Brody Pirt, 4:23; 145-Teagan Leighty (SV) dec. Legend Wilkinson, 5-4; 152-Jacob Eubanks (SV) dec. Dawson Davis, 7-0; 160-Levi Donnel (B) dec. Corey Wolfe, 10-2; 172-Matt Zinkhann (B) dec. John Mallery, 9-1; 189-Mickey Kreinbucher (B) dec. Ryan Wagner, 15-5; 215-Landon Christie (B) pinned Thomas Wuycheck, 1:00; 285-Ethan Babay (B) pinned Roman Royal, 2:37

## Butler freshman Sloboda laying groundwork for potentially historic wrestling career

John Enrietto - Eagle Sports Editor- December 23, 2022



Butler 107-pound freshman Santino Sloboda battles with Hunter Tillotson of Seneca Valley Wednesday night. Sloboda is 11-0 on the season and has allowed only one point in compiling that record. Shane Potter/Butler Eagle 12/21/22

**BUTLER TWP —** Something strange happened to undefeated Butler freshman 107-pound wrestler Santino Sloboda Wednesday night.

He didn't lose ... but he gave up a point. Santino

allowed an escape to Seneca Valley's Hunter Tillotson while building a quick 9-1 lead before pinning his opponent with 35 seconds left in the first period. "That was one of the first points he's allowed this season," Butler wrestling coach Scott Stoner said. "Santino does things out there you just can't teach. His mat awareness is incredible."

That's his wrestling style: Fast, furious, to the point. Santino is 11-0 so far this season with six of those wins by pin. He's produced 20 near-fall points. And he has lofty goals. "I want to break Cole Baxter's (school) record of 33 wins by a freshman, his record of 160 wins total," Santino said. "I want to be the best I can be. There's always room to get better out there."

Santino has been pretty good for quite a while. He was 29-0 as an eighth-grader last year, 21-0 in seventh grade before losing in the Pennsylvania Junior Wrestling state finals. He won seven consecutive PJW Area 7 wrestling championships. He's been wrestling since the age of 5.

"I couldn't wait to get to the high school level," Santino said. "I'm going up against some kids now who are stronger than me, more experienced. It's a bigger challenge and I love it. "This year, my goal is to place at the state meet. I want to put myself out there and go get it." Stoner doesn't mind such talk — as long as his wrestler is willing to back it up.

"Anyone can talk like that," the coach said. "Is Santino good enough to do all of those things? He definitely is, but if you're gonna put those expectations on yourself, I need to see him come to the room each day and work hard to improve as he goes. "And I have no doubt Santino is



going to put that work in.” Santino said his father worked with him a lot when he was younger and helped him develop a unique skill set that, frankly, is hard to coach.

“If I get myself in trouble, I feel like I can scramble out of it,” Santino said. Stoner shakes his head and smiles when thinking about some of his matches. “He’s so aggressive and so quick ... he’s a risk taker,” Stoner said. “I’ve seen him get out of messes time and time again. But when you wrestle like that, the time’s gonna come where he’s up against a tough, experienced opponent, and he’s gonna get caught. “That day will come and he’ll have to handle that.”

Santino has wrestled in numerous state and national youth tournaments through the years. He’s proven he can handle himself against the best and the current high school wrestling rankings reflect that. “Some have Santino ranked among the top eight (107-pounders) in the state,” Stoner said. “His name is well-known. But at this level, he’s only beginning. “I’ve seen him wrestle kids who are physically stronger, with experience, and he just handles them. I want him to become more fundamentally sound, but I don’t want to interfere with that kind of drive.”

Even last year, Santino talked about eventually winning a state championship in high school, becoming a Division 1 collegiate wrestler and being known as one of the best to come out of Butler’s program. “My scrambling skills are doing it for me now,” he said. “I know I have to get stronger as I get bigger. This (Wednesday night) was my first home match as a varsity wrestler. “I was a little nervous at the start , but I settled down. I’m finally here.”

# Butler Eagle

## FEATHER IN THE CAP

### Butler wrestlers win Virginia National Duals



Brendan Howe -  
Eagle Staff Writer -  
January 18, 2023

Butler wrestling coach Scott Stoner (middle, to the right of the sign) and his team celebrate a win at the Virginia National Duals this past weekend. It was the first time the Golden Tornado had won the tournament in its three trips to the event.

HAMPTON, Va. — Longtime Butler wrestling coach Scott Stoner set the scene for the Virginia National Duals — a wrestling fan's dream. Ten mats on the floor, one after another, and multiple tournaments taking place at once in a setting slightly larger than a hockey arena. The acoustics, the backdrop, and the matches being contested up and down the floor make for a unique atmosphere. "Our match might be going on and you'll hear something erupt on the one end," Stoner said. "It's just a really exciting venue and a lot of really exciting things to see and be part of."

Elation is becoming the theme of the Golden Tornado's go-round. The team added yet another accomplishment to its mantle this past weekend, winning the tournament for the first time after heading into the Hampton Coliseum as its No. 1 seed. "I've never, never accomplished something like this," said Stoner, who's taken his crew to the event each of the past three years. "It's a landmark year with everything going on ... All this stuff has been going on, First win over North Allegheny. We're undefeated to this point in the season. We've never been undefeated to this point in the season." Stoner also recently moved into third place in all-time wins among WPIAL coaches.

Butler has shown up for four tournaments so far this campaign, and cleaned house each time. They also emerged victorious at the 31-team Chartiers-Houston Invitational, the 10-team Kiski Duals, and the 33-team Southmoreland Holiday Tournament.

At the most recent gathering, the Golden Tornado competed in the American Division with 16 other teams. There were six Virginia teams at the tournament that were ranked in the top 15 of all divisions in the state. The event also featured other squads from Pennsylvania and Delaware. Butler started out by dominating Kempsville, 84-0, and moved on to down Frank Cox High School — which was rated eighth in all of Virginia — in the round that followed. Then came back-to-back Virginia state runner-up River Bend —which the Golden Tornado beat 39-26 — before an extravagant pre-finals ceremony.

"They line every team up," Stoner said. "They have the first and second and the third and fourth in each division — the collegiate, the three high school divisions. They do a color guard. They pay tribute to somebody who's been involved in Virginia wrestling and promote. Hall of Famers, they call them out. "It really builds the drama until they say, 'Okay, let's clear the mats, and let's go!' The energy level in the arena,... it gets up pretty high."

Butler's encounter with defending state champion Great Bridge only added to the suspense. In come-from-behind fashion, the Golden Tornado outlasted the No. 2 team in Virginia to take home first-place hardware. "We jumped out to an early lead and then battled back and forth," Stoner said. "In the final four weight classes — 175, 190, 213, and 285— we won by fall. We were down 26-17 heading into the final four weight classes."

As promising as the win itself was the way it was sealed. "All four falls occurred off of the same bar series that we work on," Stoner said. "So, consistency in what I'm teaching, and the kids are picking up and staying very disciplined at it ... Obviously, as a coach, you're doing many, many different things. "But the one thing you're working on and to see the kids go out and execute one after another and basically bury a very good opponent and win the match decisively — 41-26 — it was really positive on top of everything else."

Santino Sloboda went undefeated at the tournament in the 107-pound weight class, upping his record to 21-0 this go-round. Ana Malovich (114 pounds) and Kase Chopp (139) both went 4-0, as well. Landon Christy (215) and Ethan Babay (285) also stood out. Levi Donnell (160) stole the show, however, with three pins and a decision. He notched his 100th career victory in the

semis, then defeated a defending Virginia state champion in Great Bridge's Eric Doran in what Stoner said was a "knock 'em down, drag 'em out" type of clash. "He wrestled as well as he's wrestled all year," Stoner said of Donnell.

Butler is just two weekends from heading into the WPIAL team tournament. If the Golden Tornado defeat Pine-Richland on Jan. 25, they will lock up their first-ever section crown. Before that, Stoner's bunch will be in action at home against section foe Mars Wednesday night. As part of the festivities, the program will recognize its 100-member elementary wrestling team. "It'll be a great time if someone was interested in getting their kid to see wrestling," Stoner said. "A couple of elementary kids will get to wrestle head-to-head (in exhibition bouts) ... It will be packed."

He added that those who are interested in watching his team's matches but can't make it to the gym can watch on Facebook Live at Butler GT Wrestling.

"I really appreciate that kind of support from our community over this season that we've been going through here and all the success," Stoner said. "It's just nice to be winning."



## Butler wrestlers snare section crown

**January 26, 2023 Last Updated: January 25, 2023 10:14 PM**

Butler's wrestling team clinched the Section 2-3A championship with a 36-30 victory at Pine-Richland on Wednesday.

Landon Christie earned the Golden Tornado's only pin at 215 pounds, though Levi Donnel won via technical fall at 160 and Kase Chopp by major decision at 145. Gavin Rush earned a decision at 139. The other three victories for Butler came by forfeit.

"We didn't expect to just show up here and win," said Butler coach Scott Stoner. "Pine-Richland had some open classes in the lighter weights, but they also have some really good wrestlers. We left some points on the board and we've been doing that lately." The WPIAL will release its team tournament brackets Thursday.

"We're 19-1, but there's traditional powers out there like Connellsville and Trinity," Stoner said. "We'll see where they seed us."

### **Butler 36, Pine-Richland 30**

**107**-Santino Sloboda (B) won by forfeit; **114**-Ana Malovich (B) won by forfeit; **121**-Kelley Schaukowitzsch (B) won by forfeit; **127**-Dominic Ferraro (PR) pinned Leo Iarrapino, 1:25; **133**-Anthony Ferraro (PR) pinned Aiden Plopi, 1:11; **139**-Gavin Rush (B) dec. Rowan Foster, 9-5; **145**-Kase Chopp (B) major dec. Quinn Foster, 17-4; **152**-Maclane Miller (PR) pinned Dawson Davis, 3:09; **160**-Levi Donnel tech. fall Grant Pillar, 19-4; **172**-Jake Lukez (PR) dec. Matt Zinkhann, 10-7; **189**-Vaughn Spencer (PR) pinned Mickey Kreinbacher, 1:43; **215**-Landon Christie (B) pinned Dante Cruz, 4:51; **285**-Joey Schneck (PR) dec. Ethan Babay, 4-0

## Better late than never

### Butler's Babay making senior year pay off after late start in wrestling

John Enrietto - Eagle Sports Editor - January 24, 2023



Butler heavyweight wrestler Ethan Babay stands in the wrestling room at Butler Intermediate High School on Tuesday. Justin Guido/Butler Eagle

BUTLER TWP — Weights over wrestling. Ethan Babay made that decision during his freshman year at Butler. Golden Tornado wrestling coach Scott Stoner tried convincing him otherwise, but Babay couldn't be swayed.

"Ethan was a little rough around the edges in junior high and I talked with him

about discipline and about how wrestling might be able to do that for him," Stoner recalled.

"I was all about football then," Babay said. "All I wanted to do was get in the weight room and lift all winter. I was a wild kid when I was younger. It was just immaturity. I was looking up to the wrong people. "I wasn't into wrestling then. I didn't think it was for me." Now he can't get enough of it.

Babay joined the Tornado wrestling team his sophomore year, but it wasn't Stoner who convinced him. It was his fellow football lineman, Jake Pomykata, a junior at the time who had been involved in wrestling for a few years. Babay and Pomykata were both heavyweights.

"Those two lifted weights together in the annex building at 6 a.m. every day," Stoner said. "They became close friends. They were like brothers. Jake was involved in a lot of activities here. He's had a tremendous influence on Ethan." He also blocked Babay from starting varsity. Pomykata graduated last year after putting together a 17-6 record at heavyweight his junior year and 30-9 his senior campaign, including a berth in the PIAA Tournament. Now Babay wants to follow suit.

"Jake talked me into giving wrestling a try, but my sophomore year was the COVID year and I didn't get to wrestle in a varsity match," Babay said. "But I did work out with Jake in practice every day and I learned a lot. "Last year, I went 3-3, got a taste of it. I won our junior varsity

tournament, which gave me a little confidence, but they were JV guys. I knew it wasn't the caliber of wrestler I would be facing."

While he wasn't wrestling, Babay was working on his craft. His desire to succeed on the mat became as strong as his desire to excel on the football field. So when his senior year arrived, he was ready.

With Pomykata now in college, Babay is 25-7 with 21 pins and 142 team points, both of which lead the Tornado. "And he's still learning," Stoner said. "Ethan was too aggressive, got caught and pinned by (Lucas) Palermo of North Hills at the Chartiers-Houston tournament. He wrestled Palermo again in our dual match and pinned him.

"When he makes a mistake on the mat, he doesn't give up. He battles and works to get himself out of trouble. His technique is improving and he has enough confidence to wrestle aggressively, That combination is a good thing.

"I could see Ethan coming on strong last year. I wished we had an extra spot in the lineup for him that season. I thought about trying him at 215 pounds, but he weighed 240 and that was just too much. He had to wait his turn. I don't think I've ever had a single-season starter have the impact on our varsity lineup that he's had," Stoner added.

Babay expected to be successful this year. "I can't say I'm surprised at what's going on because I've put in the hard work," Babay said. "Put in hard work toward anything and it will eventually pay off. My goal is to wrestle in the state tournament. It won't be easy getting there because the WPIAL has the best wrestling in the state ... a lot of tough dudes, but I think the state tournament is attainable for me."

Looking to go into nursing as a career, Babay is visiting Fairmont State in Friday. "They have a good nursing program and a wrestling team," Babay said. "I'm not ruling out playing football in college, but I'm leaning more toward wrestling now. I want to continue in this sport." Stoner isn't surprised. "He's worked too hard to stop now," the Butler coach said.



## Butler wrestling breaks through

**January 28, 2023**

He's got 431 career dual match wins, including 19-1 this year. He ranks No. 1 in the WPIAL among active coaches, No. 5 all-time in WPIAL history. And District 7 is considered the toughest wrestling district in all of Pennsylvania.

His resume includes more than 30 tournament championships and 18 appearances in the WPIAL team tournament. He's also produced 35 individual section champions and 205 WPIAL qualifiers.

Yet this season, the 30th of Scott Stoner's varsity wrestling coaching career at Butler, may be the one he's been waiting for. Stoner's teams had never defeated North Allegheny in a dual match until this year, when sophomore Gavin Rush scored a decision in the night's final match to secure a 29-23 team victory.

Seneca Valley had been the dominant wrestling program in the county for the last few years. The bulk of those standout wrestlers are now graduated and the Golden Tornado defeated the Raiders in a dual match earlier this year as well. Wednesday night, the Tornado defeated Pine-Richland to win the section team title.

The Tornado won the prestigious Kiski Duals early in the season, including a win over Waynesburg that snapped that program's lengthy winning streak.

Entering this past week, Butler had nine wrestlers with 18 or more victories. Seven of those had more than 20 wins already. Santino Sloboda, a freshman 107-pounder, is 28-0. Levi Donnel, 28-2 at 160 pounds, are legitimate WPIAL title contenders who could also succeed at the state level. Kelley Schaukowitzsch, Kase Chopp, Matt Zinkhann, Mickey Kreinbucher and Ethan Babay are the Tornado's other 20-plus win wrestlers.

It remains to be seen how this season winds up. It's already been a memorable one for what has been a consistent, solid program.

# Butler Eagle

## SUDDEN DEFEAT

### Butler wrestling edged by Hempfield in WPIAL tourney



February 02, 2023

Butler's Mickey Kreinbucher, top, has control of Hempfield's Ryan Steffey in the 189-pound bout in Wednesday's WPIAL Class 3A team quarterfinal playoff. Kreinbucher earned a pin, but Butler fell to the Spartans, 32-31. Shane Potter/Butler Eagle

BUTLER TWP — History was not on Butler's side Wednesday night. Following a 41-26 defeat of Peters Township in the first-round of the WPIAL Class 3A team wrestling tournament, the Golden Tornado lost to Hempfield 32-31 at Butler High School.

A win would have sent Butler to Saturday's semifinal round for the first time in the 32 years of the program's existence. Butler held a 31-24 lead late on the Spartans, but Hempfield earned a combined eight points in the final two bouts at 127 and 133 pounds.

Leo Iarrapino trailed the Spartans' Owen Caracciola 6-2 entering the final period at 127. The former managed a reversal to cut the deficit to 6-4 and was on the verge of turning Caracciola onto his back when time expired. Ethan Lebin then ended Butler's hopes of advancing by earning a technical fall over Gavin Rush at 133.

Butler had defeated the Spartans 42-30 earlier this season at the Kiski Duals. "When we beat them, we got pins at 121, 127 and 172," said Butler coach Scott Stoner. "We needed pins tonight and the opportunities were there, but we didn't execute well enough. They (Spartans) lost small tonight and that was the difference." "Hempfield is a tough team with tough kids." The two falls Butler did earn against the Spartans came from Kase Chopp, who needed less than 20 seconds to defeat Logan Williams at 139 to begin the match, and Mickey Kreinbucher, who pinned Ryan Steffey late in the second period.

"A big move for us tonight was moving (Caracciola) from 121 to 127," said Hempfield coach Vince DeAugustine. "His win was huge for us. "We knew Butler is strong in the upper weights, but we fought hard tonight." That move allowed Butler's Kelley Schaukowitsch to win by forfeit at 121 and matched Caracciola up against Iarrapino. The former gained the lead with an early takedown before withstanding the late rally. Hempfield slipped past Trinity in Wednesday's first round. The match ended in a 33-33 tie, but the Spartans advanced on criteria. Meanwhile, Butler trailed Peters Township 17-3 after four bouts, but won six of the final eight contests to win going away. The run began with Levi Donnel pinned Eli Schratz in 70 seconds. Also earning falls against the Indians were Santino Sloboda (107), Kreinbucher (189) and Christie (215).

The Tornado have one team competition left, a home meeting with Bethel Park Feb. 15 when Butler (20-2) will recognize its seniors. "We loaded up on tournaments this season (winning four of five)," said Stoner. "That's why we have more wins than a lot of teams, but we believed it would give us more opportunities to develop our younger kids."

### **Quarterfinal - Hempfield 32, Butler 31 (Match started at 139 pounds)**

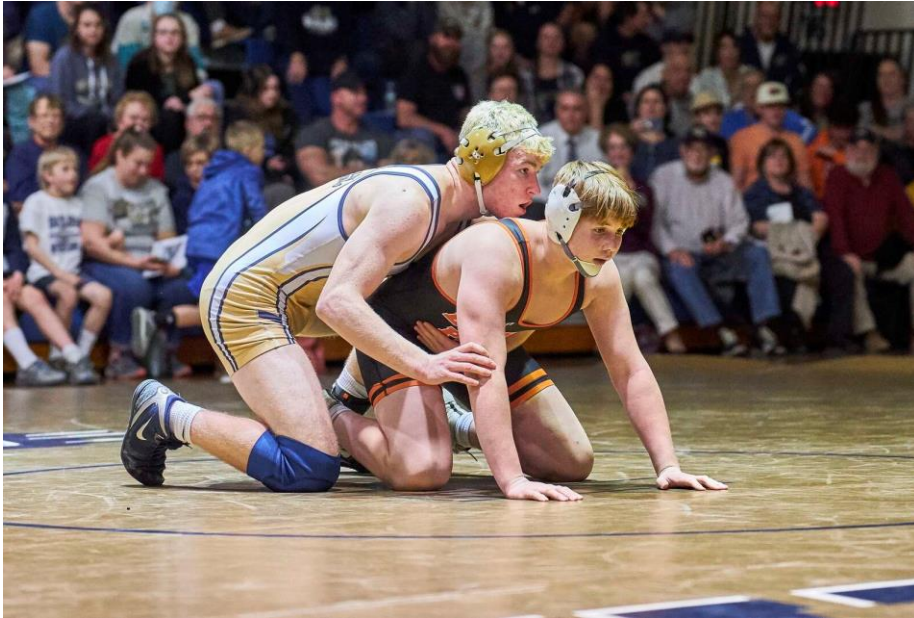
**107**-Santino Sloboda (B) dec. Nico Kapusta, 11-4; **114**-Ty King (H) dec. Ana Malovich, 5-1; **121**-Kelley Schaukowitsch (B) won by forfeit; **127**-Owen Caracciolo (H) dec. Leo Iarrapino, 6-4; **133**-Ethan Lebin (H) tech. fall Gavin Rush, 16-0; **139**-Kase Chopp (B) pinned Logan Williams, :14; **145**-Hempfield pinned Legend Wilkinson, 1:40; **152**-Charley Mesich (H) pinned Dawson Davis, 1:03; **160**-Lucas Kapusta (H) dec. Levi Donnel, 5-2; **172**-Matt Zinkhann (B) major dec. Pierce Turner, 9-1; **189**-Mickey Kreinbucher (B) pinned Ryan Steffey, 3:50; **215**-Elijah Binakonsky (H) pinned Landon Christie, 1:14; **285**-Ethan Babay (B) won by forfeit

### **First-round - Butler 41, Peters Township 26 (Match started at 133 pounds)**

**107**-Santino Sloboda (B) pinned John Whitehead, :41; **114**-Isaac Meyers (PT) dec. Ana Malovich, 8-4; **121**-Kelley Schaukowitsch (B) major dec. Brayden Apple, 10-0; **127**-John Radnor (PT) won by forfeit; **133**-Darius McMillon (PT) tech. fall Gavin Rush, 16-0; **139**-Kase Chopp (B) dec. Jackson Spiteri, 8-2; **145**-Noah Schratz (PT) pinned Legend Wilkinson, 1:23; **152**-Chris Cibrone (PT) pinned Dawson Davis, 3:05; **160**-Levi Donnel (B) pinned Eli Schratz, 1:10; **172**-Matt Zinkhann (B) major dec. Giovanni DeChicchis, 10-1; **189**-Mickey Kreinbucher (B) pinned Parker Nave, 4:56; **215**-Landon Christie (B) pinned Zack Stromock, 1:52; **285**-Ethan Babay (B) won by forfeit

## Senior send-off

Honored Butler wrestlers put Bethel Park away late in final home match



John Enrietto - Eagle Sports Editor -  
February 15, 2023

Butler 189-pounder Mickey Kreinbucher, left, prepares to resume his match against Hunter Geolz during the Golden Tornado's 42-31 victory over Bethel Park. Shane Potter/Butler Eagle 2/15/23

BUTLER TWP — Senior Night was not to be spoiled. Butler's seniors saw to that. The Golden Tornado wrestling team trailed Bethel Park, 25-12, with six matches remaining in Butler's home

finale — and the last time the Tornado seniors would ever be wrestling in the Intermediate High School gym.

Sparked by its seniors, Butler rallied for a 42-31 victory. The Tornado finished the dual match season at 21-2 while Bethel Park slipped to 12-6. "We weren't gonna lose," senior 172-pounder Matt Zinkhann said. "We haven't lost to any team we felt was beneath us (talent-wise). There was no way we were going to start tonight."



Dawson Davis, a junior, got the Tornado rally started with a pin just 1:09 into his match at 152 pounds. Senior Levi Donnel then improved to 30-3 on the year with a forfeit win at 160. He is 110-16 in his career.

Butler's Matt Zinkhann, on top, takes control of Bethel Park's A.J. Tomaino

during their 172-pound match Wednesday night. Zinkhann won by pin in the Golden Tornado's 42-31 Senior Night victory. Shane Potter/Butler Eagle 2/15/23



Zinkhann pinned the Black Hawks' A.J. Tomaino at 2:27 at 172, giving Butler the lead it never lost. Zinkhann broke a scoreless tie by taking Tomaino down in the final 10 seconds of the first period, then pinning him early in the second.

Fellow senior Mickey Kreinbucher followed with a pin just 1:31 into his 189-pound match, giving Butler a 36-25 advantage. Bethel scored a pin at 215, but the Black Hawks forfeited the final match of the night at heavyweight.

Butler honored seniors Garrett Walsh, Aiden Plopi, Donnel, Zinkhann, Kreinbucher, Landon Christie, Ethan Babay and statistician Bailee Kauffman prior to the dual. "When you have a heavy senior-laden class, you expect to have a big season and we have," Butler coach Scott Stoner said. "We came as close as you can get to qualifying for the state (team) tournament. We barely lost to Hempfield, then Hempfield won a match at states, came close in two others ... I mean, our team was right there.

"We had some guys rise to the occasion tonight." Santino Sloboda stayed undefeated at 107 pounds for the Tornado, scoring a first-period pin. Kase Chopp also won by first-period fall for Butler at 139 pounds, as did Davis at 152. "Dawson should be at 145. He gives up some weight at 152, but he's tall and lanky and has been coming on," Stoner said.

Zinkhann improved to 26-9 on the season while Kreinbucher moved to 25-6. Christiie, who lost at 215, is 20-11 on the year. Babay is 23-7 on the season after entering his senior season with 11 career varsity wins. "We're always confident going into a match," Zinkhann said. "All I can do is the best I can and that's what I'm planning (for the upcoming individual section tournament).

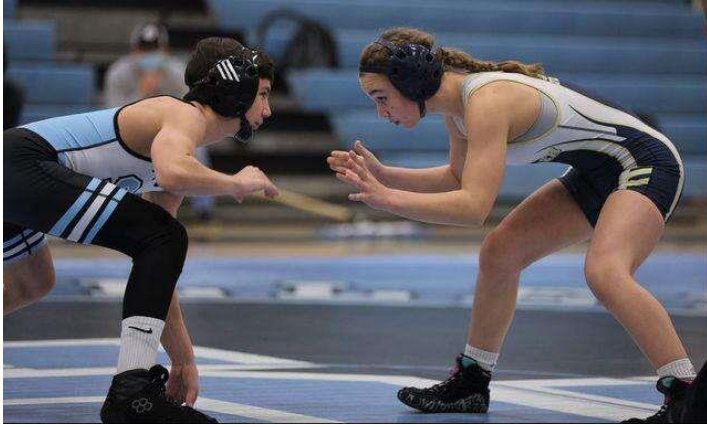
Bethel Park coach Tyler Nauman said he felt the "swing matches" of the night were at 139 and 152 pounds. "We lost the matches I thought we'd lose, won the matches I thought we'd win," he said. "I felt like we had to win at 139 and 152 because those were up for grabs. We got crushed in both, pinned early in both

Stoner lauded the loyalty of Walsh and Plopi, two seniors who have stayed with the program despite rarely getting varsity time on the mat. "They know our lineup, know the situation, knew they'd hardly get on the mat for varsity, if at all," the coach said. "But they've stayed with it, worked hard in the room. They should feel a part of this because they are a part of this." Butler is idle until the individual section tourney, slated for Feb. 25 at North Allegheny. "Our section combines with another, so we'll have teams like Kiski and Plum in there with the teams we normally face," Stoner said. "Section titles won't come easily. They'll definitely be earned."

### **Butler 42, Bethel Park 31**

107-Santino Sloboda (B) pinned Jonah Steadman, 1:17; 114-Jaden Palumbo (BP) dec. Ana Malovich, 14-2; 121-Aiden Bench (BP) pinned Kelly Schaukowsch, 2:42; 127-Aden Scott (BP) pinned Garrett walsh, 3:06; 133-Mason Kernon (BP) tech. fall over Gavin Ruish, 3:00 (26-11); 139-Kase Chopp (B) pinned Ethan Higgins, 1:18; 145-Maksim Miller (BP) dec. Legend Wilkinson, 9-0; 152-Dawson Davis (B) pinned Dheyaa Damyan, 1:09; 160-Levi Donnel (B) by forfeit; 172-Matt Zinkhann (B) pinned A.J. Tomaino, 2:27; 189-Mickey Kreinbucher (B) pinned Hunter Geolz, 1:31; 215-Landon Hartman (BP) pinned Landon Christie, 5:48; HWT-Ethan Babay (B) by forfeit

## Malovich captures Western Pa. crown



Josh Rizzo - Eagle Correspondent - February 20, 2023

Ana Malovich knew the match she was waiting for was a meeting with Canon-McMillan's Gracie Elliot in the 112-pound finals Sunday at North Allegheny High School. But the second annual Western Pennsylvania Girls Wrestling Championship was more than just about a win for Malovich. The Butler junior wrestler, ranked 13th nationally by USA Wrestling at 106 pounds, knew she had a significant experience advantage on her first two opponents.

Malovich, who scored a takedown with a minute remaining in the finals to beat Elliott 5-4, tried to encourage her less-experienced foes. "I want to get as many girls to try the sport as possible," Malovich said. "We want to grow the sport and not move backwards." The girls wrestling movement has picked up serious steam in the past few months. On Feb. 14, Penridge became the 100th school to sponsor the sport. Now that 100 schools sponsor the event, the PIAA board of directors can vote on full sponsorship of the sport.

When the sport is fully sponsored, the PIAA can host a championship tournament that likely will be held concurrently with the boys' tournament in Hershey. If the PIAA approves the sport to be sanctioned, it could be official as soon as the 2023-24 school year.

What Malovich is excited the most by for the sport being sponsored is the opportunity it presents to girls. Currently, girls who want to wrestle at the high school level must compete on the boys team if they want to qualify for the PIAA Championships. What that can lead to is a tough feeling. "It can be discouraging," Malovich said. "I had a lot more success at 106 because the guys are freshmen, and they aren't big and strong. At 114 to 116 pounds, they are cutting down. You don't have the strength to keep up, and it's discouraging."

Malovich, who wrestles nearly year-round, placed third at the Super 32 event and fourth at the United States Wrestling Freestyle Tournament in Fargo, N.D., during the past year. In addition to high school, Malovich competes in the national and freestyle seasons. All that experience paid off against Elliot, who transferred to Canon-McMillan from South Carolina, who Malovich had watched on FloWrestling to study for. After two periods, the match was knotted at 3-3. Malovich would cut Elliott loose in the third period to give away an escape before securing the match-sealing takedown.

Malovich, who thought she could have done better, felt some nerves before the match. "I wrestle reserved and hesitant," Malovich said. "Now that I know her style, I could do better next time." Malovich will compete in the section championships this weekend with the Butler boys wrestling team to try and earn a WPIAL berth for the second time at 114 pounds.

Malovich, who started wrestling at 5 years old, is excited to see the growth in the sport. What she would like to do is continue to push toward wrestling at the next level. "Seeing the growth of the sport is cool," Malovich said. "Especially since I started competing so young. I just want to push myself to be the best I can be."

# Butler Eagle

## Survival on the mats

### Butler, Seneca Valley, Mars wrestlers look to extend season at WPIAL Northern Sectional

John Enrietto - Eagle Sports Editor - February 23, 2023



Butler's Santino Sloboda wrestles Seneca Valley's Hunter Tillotson in a December match at Butler. Sloboda is one of 11 Golden Tornado wrestlers headed to the Northern Sectional. Shane Potter/Butler Eagle

Win or go home? Not quite. Place among the top six in your weight class or your season is over. That's the challenge facing Butler, Seneca Valley and Mars wrestlers at Saturday's WPIAL AAA Northern Sectional at North Allegheny High School.

"Things have been shuffled around a bit this year," Butler coach Scott Stoner said. "A lot of teams dropped down to Class 2A this season. There's only 38 3A schools, so they divided the six sections into three sectional tournaments. "We've seen some kids from these other schools (Plum, Kiski Area, Fox Chapel, Shaler, Central Catholic and Armstrong) in some tournaments, but we haven't seen all of them. In some cases, you're not sure what you're up against."

The top six placers in each weight class advance to next weekend's WPIAL Championships at North Allegheny High School. "There used to be 11 teams in our section," Seneca Valley coach Kevin Wildrick said. "That's all changed. Tournaments like this are the reason we wrestle the high-caliber schedule we do. "You want your kids to be mentally and physically prepared to battle through this. Hopefully, our schedule adequately prepared them that way."

Butler has 11 wrestlers in the Northern Sectional. Only one of them — Dawson Davis (7-22) at 152 — isn't seeded among the top six in his respective weight class. Santino Sloboda (31-0) at 107 pounds, Kase Chopp (29-6) at 139 and Levi Donnel (30-3) at 160 are all seeded No. 1 for the Golden Tornado. Mickey Kreinbucher (25-6) is seeded second at 189. "Santino is ranked No. 1 in the WPIAL, but the Plum kid (freshman Owen Campbell) is ranked No. 3," Stoner said.



“The No. 2 kid is from Canon McMillan. We considered bumping Chase up to 145, but that’s really not his weight. We didn’t expect the North Allegheny kid (senior Nathan Bonaparte) to bump up from 133, but he did.

“We expect Levi to get through everybody, but there are kids in that weight division who are capable of beating him if he doesn’t wrestle well. That’s how wrestling at this time of year is.” Seneca Valley has a pair of top-seeded wrestlers in Connor Smith (23-6) at 114 and Tyler Chappell (24-5) at 127. Zach Hill is No. 2 at 133 and Jacob

Eubanks No.6 at 152, but no other Raider wrestler is seeded better than seventh.

“The seeding is always fair and it’s fair this year,” Wildrick said. “But I’m still confident we can get a lot of kids through. We’re pretty battle-tested.”

Here are the wrestlers who will be competing for Butler, Seneca Valley and Mars at the Northern Sectional, with their weight class, seeding and won-loss record:

107-Santino Sloboda (1) 31-0, 121-Kelly Schaukowitsch (4) 24-11, 127-Leo Iarrapino (6) 12-14, 133-Gavin Rush (5) 20-11, 139-Kase Chopp (1) 29-6, 152-Dawson Davis (9) 7-22, 160-Levi Donnel (1) 30-3, 172-Matt Zinkhann (3) 26-9, 189-Mickey Kreinbacher (2) 25-6, 215-Landon Christie (3) 20-11, 285-Ethan Babay (3) 28-8

## Butler Eagle

# Sloboda undefeated sectional champ

## SV’s Smith, Chappell, also take wrestling titles into upcoming WPIAL tourney

John Enrietto - Eagle Sports Editor, February 27, 2023

Butler's Santino Sloboda takes control of North Allegheny's Gus Stedeford during their WPIAL Northern Sectional 107-pound championship match Saturday at North Allegheny. Sloboda won by technical fall. Shane Potter/Butler Eagle

WEXFORD — An undefeated freshman, a four-time champion and a repeat winner. All in all, Butler and Seneca Valley enjoyed a solid day on the mats during the WPIAL AAA Northern Sectional Saturday at North Allegheny High School.

Seneca Valley's Connor Smith has his arm raised after winning the 114-pound WPIAL Northern Sectional title match Saturday. Shane Potter/Butler Eagle

The Golden Tornado moved eight wrestlers — all finishing among the top three in their respective weight classes — on to this weekend's WPIAL Championships at Canon McMillan High School. Seneca Valley advanced seven wrestlers, including a pair of section champions.

The top six in each weight class from the Northern Sectional advance to the WPIAL tourney. "I'm greedy. I always hope to get all of my wrestlers through," Butler coach Scott Stoner said. "We had one kid not make weight. That was disappointing, but overall, we had a pretty good day."

Leading the way for the Golden Tornado was 107-pound freshman Santino Sloboda (34-0). He stayed unbeaten on the year by winning by technical fall in all three of his matches Saturday. He defeated North Allegheny's Gus Stedeford, 17-1, with 16 seconds left in the second period.



Seneca Valley's Tyler Chappell won his fourth section championship at the WPIAL Northern Sectional on Saturday at North Allegheny. Shane Potter/Butler Eagle

"I don't know if I expected to do that," Sloboda said of winning each match by technical fall. "I'm happy with the way I wrestled. Just keep working hard and get

ready for the next one."

Sloboda was one of only two wrestlers in the Northern Sectional with a perfect record, Pine-Richland sophomore Vaughn Spencer (23-0) at 189 pounds being the other.

"There's some pressure that comes with that, I guess," Sloboda said. "Sometimes I wonder if I'd be more motivated had I dealt with a loss early in the season, but I don't think it affects me. Going into WPIALs undefeated is pretty cool."

"Santino's first opponent was overmatched and that frustrated him a little bit," Stoner said. "He dominated two quality opponents after that and that was impressive."

Equally as impressive were Seneca Valley junior Connor Smith and senior Tyler Chappell. Smith (25-6) won the 114-pound section title — he was a section champ last year as well — by dominating his first two foes before edging Rylen Campbell of Plum, 3-0, in the finals. Chappell (27-5), who has 125 wins in his career, won the 127-pound title by pinning his first two opponents and scoring a 12-1 decision over Pine-Richland's Dominic Ferraro in the title match. Chappell is a four-time section champion. "It is so hard to do that," SV coach Kevin Wildrick said of winning four section championships. "Alejandro is the only other wrestler in the history of our program with that accomplishment."

Smith said he benefits from facing Chappell in the practice room each day. "He's helped me so much. I couldn't help but get better," Smith said. "They not only go at each other in there, they

stop and talk about technique, share what moves they use ... They are great wrestling partners and teammates,” Wildrick said.

Smith was scoreless against Campbell until scoring an escape with 19 seconds left in the second period. He added two more points in the final period while starting on top. “It felt good to go into that last period with a lead, but I was still confident,” Smith said. “I wrestle pretty well from on top. I figured I’d score at that point.”

Three Butler wrestlers were defeated in the section finals. Kase Chopp lost an overtime decision to North Allegheny’s Nathan Monteparte at 139, Levi Donnel dropped a 4-2 decision to NA’s Adam Rohan at 160 and Mickey Kreinbucher lost by technical fall to the unbeaten Spencer at 189. Coming back to place third for Butler were Gavin Rush at 133, Matt Zinkhann at 172, Landon Christie at 215 and Ethan Babay at 285.

Chopp’s match went to the final 30-second overtime session, where he had to ride out Monteparte for that period to win the title. Monteparte was able to break free midway through that final frame. “Tough loss for Kase ... You have to play the game there, force him out of bounds, take a stalling warning, whatever,” Stoner said. “He just couldn’t keep him secured.”

Donnel was taken down in the first period, scored a reversal in the second, then allowed an escape late in the third. He was penalized a point after desperately leaping on Rohan’s back in the closing seconds. “Falling behind early made it harder for Levi, but that kid wrestled a good match against him,” Stoner said. “Mickey, Ethan, those guys are having great years. Ethan’s been a good story all season.” In his first year as a starter, Babay has 31 wins so far on the campaign.

The Raiders’ Zach Hill lost in the finals at 133 pounds. Corey Wolfe, a freshman who entered the tourney at 10-14, placed third at 160. Jack Tofanelli was fourth at 121, Thomas Wuycheck fifth at 215 and Jacob Eubanks sixth at 152.

The WPIAL tourney takes place Friday and Saturday this week.

## **WPIAL AAA Northern Sectional at North Allegheny**

### **Finals**

**107 pounds-Santino Sloboda (Butler)** tech. fall over Gus Stedeford (North Allegheny), 3:44 (17-1); **133**-Anthony Ferraro (Pine-Richland) pinned Zach Hill (Seneca Valley), 3:35; **139**-Nathan Monteparte (North Allegheny) dec. **Kase Chopp (Butler)**, 3-2 in OT; **160**-Adam Rohan (North Allegheny) dec. **Levi Donnel (Butler)**, 4-2; **172**-Antonino Walker (Plum) dec. Mark Gray (Kiski Area), 2-1; **189**-Vaughn Spencer (Pine-Richland) tech. fall over **Mickey Kreinbucher (Butler)**, 2:19 (15-0); **215**-Connor Jacobs (Armstrong) dec. Aiden Buggiey (North Allegheny), 3-1; **285**-Joey Schneck (Pine-Richland) pinned Jack Crider (Kiski Area), 4:30

### **Consolation Finals**

**133**-Gavin Rush (Butler) dec. Max Formaini (Armstrong), 3-1; **172**-Matt Zinkhann (Butler) dec. Nezumihiro Green (Central Catholic), 3-1; **215**-Landon Christie (Butler) dec. Vito Barravecchio (Shaler), 8-0; **285**-Ethan Babay (Butler) pinned D’Angelo Hamilton, 4:16.

## Grind or go home

### Getting through WPIAL Tournament daunting task for all wrestlers

John Enrietto - Eagle Sports Editor - March 01, 2023

Seeding is helpful. It's far from a guarantee. The WPIAL Class AAA Wrestling Tournament gets under way at 4:30 p.m. Friday at Canon McMillan High School. Seven of Butler's eight wrestlers are seeded among the top eight of their respective weight classes. Seneca Valley has a pair of seeded wrestlers among its seven qualifiers.

"I tell our kids. It's the WPIAL tournament and anything can happen," SV coach Kevin Wildrick said. "I've seen non-seeded wrestlers get through. You just have to show up ready to do battle. "None of these matches are easy."

Butler freshman 107-pounder Santino Sloboda (34-0) — who won all three of his matches in the Northern Sectional by technical fall — is the No. 1 seed in his weight class. Seneca Valley's Connor Smith (26-6) and Tyler Chappell (27-5) are seeded No. 2 at 114 and 127 pounds, respectively. Smith dominated his first two sectional matches before fighting his way to a 3-0 decision in the 114-pound final. Chappell enters the tournament as a four-time sectional champion.

The top four placers in each weight class advance to the PIAA Championships at Hershey's Giant Center the following weekend. "I like both of their chances going in," Wildrick said. "Still, they'll have to earn it."

Sloboda has defeated every other ranked 107-pound WPIAL wrestler handily this season — with the exception of Canon McMillan junior Tanner Mizenko (34-8 with 22 pins). Mizenko is seeded No. 2 in the tourney. "Kids that (Mizenko) has beaten in competitive matches, Santino's defeated in lopsided fashion," Butler coach Scott Stoner said. "Santino's style is so funky and different. He's hard to prepare for. But you can stumble against anybody in this tournament. "We're going up against some of the best wrestling programs and coaches in the country Friday and Saturday."

Sloboda is trying to get through the WPIAL tourney with a perfect record. If he does so, he will join Golden Tornado Hall of Famer Cole Baxter in that accomplishment. "We've had a kid do it before. Santino is every bit as dominant this year as Cole was then," Stoner said. "You figure ... he (Sloboda) scored 49 points (in the Northern Sectional) and gave up one. That's crazy."

Butler's other seeded wrestlers this weekend are No. 7 Kase Chopp (21-7) at 139, No. 5 Levi Donnel (32-4) at 160, No. 6 Matt Zinkhann (29-10) at 172, No. 6 Mickey Kreinbacher (27-7) at 189, No. 8 Landon Christie (24-12) at 215 and No. 5 Ethan Babay (31-9) at 285. Gavin Rush (24-11) will be competing at 133. "I remember years where we'd get one or two kids down there and they were at the bottom of the list," Stoner said. "This shows we've grown."

The WPIAL is placing wrestlers first through eighth this year. Though the top four are the only ones moving on, matches will take place for fifth-sixth place and seventh-eighth place. "It's a great wrinkle they've added in," Wildrick said. "Kids should have a chance to place in a tournament like this, even if they don't go to states. Placing among the top eight at WPIALs is an achievement that should be recognized." Stoner agreed. "This provides kids more opportunity to compete, to earn a place," he said. "They work hard all year and deserve to see if they can earn a placement. It's a good thing to build from for next year."

The quarterfinal round takes place Friday night, along with the first round of consolations. The semifinal round begins at 11:30 a.m Saturday with the final round slated to begin at 3:30 p.m.



## WPIAL wise to add on

**March 04, 2023**

The WPIAL is in an "add on" type of mood this winter sports postseason. And while high school athletic districts are often times criticized, the WPIAL got this one right.

The league's basketball tournaments offer a consolation round to teams that are bounced from the championship bracket after winning a playoff game. The consolation bracket is then used to determine the order of seeding (beyond first and second) for the state tournament. This is the first year a consolation bracket has been part of the tournament. In past years, some teams would lose in the second round, then wait and see whether they would qualify for the state tourney by the team that beat them "carrying them back in" by reaching the WPIAL Final or whatever.

That left defeated teams with a week or two of uncertainty as to whether their seasons were over or would be continued. That left some coaches to deal with rather uninspired practices because the players didn't know if they'd have any more games to practice for. The consolation bracket changes all of that. Instead of days of practice, teams had more games to prepare for, games with meaning. They are playing games to determine where they will be seeded in the state tourney. They were also determining whether they would make the state tourney, based on how they do in those consolation games.

Former Butler girls basketball coach Jonna Burke, now coaching at Shady Side Academy, said she likes the consolation games "because I'd rather see teams earn their spots than be handed one." She is one coach who hopes this system returns next year.

The WPIAL Class AAA wrestling tournament is sending the top four wrestlers in each weight class to next weekend's state tournament in Hershey. That number is commonplace for the WPIAL event. This year, wrestlers will have a chance to compete for placements fifth through eighth at the WPIAL Tournament. They will not advance to the state meet, but they will have a chance to end their seasons with a win.



Wrestling coaches in this area recognize how deep in talent the WPIAL is in the sport. Many argue that the WPIAL tourney is the toughest high school wrestling competition (short of state tournaments) in the country. There is prestige in being able to finish among the top eight in a weight class at the WPIAL event.

Before, wrestlers did not have the opportunity to find out if they could finish fifth through eighth. For a senior, it's a positive way to go out. For an underclassmen, it's something to use as a catapult toward next season. The WPIAL is allowing its athletes to decide these things themselves. For that, it should be commended.

John Enrietto is sports editor of the Butler Eagle



## 3 county wrestlers reach semifinals

### Sloboda, Smith, Chappell roll on at WPIAL wrestling

**March 04, 2023**

Butler's Santino Sloboda, Seneca Valley's Connor Smith and Tyler Chappell advanced to the semifinal round as the WPIAL Class AAA Wrestling Championships got under way Friday at Canon McMillan High School. Sloboda, 36-0 on the season at 107 pounds, won his two Friday matches easily. He pinned Bethel Park's Jaden Palombine in 1:35 in the first round, then scored a 16-0 technical fall over Waynesburg's Floyd Huff in the quarterfinal round.

The Raiders' Smith (28-6) pinned Nathan Caracciolo of Hempfield in 1:52 of their first-round match at 114 pounds. Smith advanced to the semifinals with a 4-0 decision of Arontay Heningcamp of Gateway in the quarterfinals. SV's Chappell (29-5), wrestling at 127 pounds, pinned Aric Learn of Armstrong in 3:43 of their first-round match. Chappell then scored a 1-0 decision over T.J. Allison in the quarterfinals.

Butler had five other wrestlers — Kase Chopp at 139, Matt Zinkhann at 172, Mickey Kreinbacher at 189, Landon Christie at 215 and Ethan Babay at 285 — reach the quarterfinal round, but each was bumped into the consolations at that point. Seneca Valley's Zach Hill won his first match at 133 to reach the quarterfinals, but lost by technical fall to Hempfield's Ethan Lebin.

The Golden Tornado's Levi Donnel, a No. 5 seed, dropped a 6-4 decision to Dominic Hartman of Penn-Trafford in the first round at 160 pounds, leaving him to work his way back through consolations.

Also dropping first-round matches Friday were Butler's Gavin Rush at 133, Seneca Valley's Jack Tofanelli at 121, Jacob Eubanks at 152, Corey Wolfe at 160 and Thomas Wuycheck at 215.

## Butler's Sloboda 2nd in WPIAL

### SV's Smith, Chappell also advance to PIAA Wrestling Championships

John Enrietto - Eagle Sports Editor - March 06, 2023

Butler freshman Santino Sloboda, right, looks to make a move during Saturday's WPIAL AAA Wrestling Championships at Canon McMillan High School. Sloboda placed second at 107 pounds. Photo Courtesy of Tom Punchur

CANONSBURG — Santino Sloboda, Connor Smith and Tyler Chappell will continue their respective wrestling seasons Thursday at the PIAA Championships in Hershey.

But Saturday was a study in frustration for the Butler County trio at the WPIAL Class AAA Championships at Canon McMillan High School. Butler freshman Sloboda took a 37-0 record into the 107-pound title match against Canon McMillan junior Tanner Mizenko and was pinned 39 seconds into the second period. Smith, a junior 114-pounder for Seneca Valley, lost an overtime decision to Franklin Regional's Tyler Kapusta in the semifinal round.



Raider senior 127-pounder Tyler Chappell also lost a close match in the semifinals, dropping a 3-1 decision to Canon McMillan's Andrew Binni. Smith went on to take place third at 114, Chappell fourth at 127 to qualify for the state tourney. "Seedings don't matter much at this point," SV coach Kevin Wildrick said. "Anything can happen at the

state meet. They got through and we'll go from here."

Sloboda had been cruising along at 107. He won all of his matches by technical fall at the Northern Sectional, then began the WPIAL tourney with a second-period pin and another win by technical fall. He decisioned North Allegheny's Gus Stedeford 8-2 in the semifinals. "He (Stedeford) was never in that match," Butler coach Scott Stoner said. "He basically tried staying away from Santino, not allow him to get in on him and turn his hips like he did at the sectional."

Mizenko (38-8) did not allow Sloboda to complete the long-distance shots the Butler wrestler likes to do. He scored a first-period takedown — forcing Sloboda to wrestle from behind — and started on top in the second period. Mizenko was able to overpower Sloboda and turn him for the pin.

"Mizenko is a junior, two more years of high school wrestling under his belt," Stoner said prior to the final round. "He's had more time to build up physically and he's from a great program,

wrestling here at home. Those Canon-Mac kids know how to get it done. “Santino hasn’t wrestled this kid before. He will be a challenge. Undefeated going into the WPIAL final ... That’s a lot of pressure on a freshman.”

Sloboda admitted Mizenko’s physical strength was a factor. “I haven’t wrestled a kid as strong as him,” he said. “I tried to get the upper hand early and I couldn’t get him down. Then he got me in a position I couldn’t power out of.”

Sloboda last lost a match at the junior state tournament last year. He was unbeaten in the regular season in seventh, eighth and ninth grade. “I’m not accustomed to losing. I knew that first loss could come, but it hurts that it came now,” Sloboda said. “I’ll learn from this. He (Mizenko) was better prepared for this match. He out-wrestled me. I’ll make the adjustment.”

“I’m thrilled I’m going. I’m excited about it. I plan to make the most of it.”

Butler’s Ethan Babay wrapped up a 34-win season at 285 pounds by pinning Thomas Jefferson’s Shepherd Turk in their fifth-place match.

“Ethan was a great story all year,” Stoner said of the first-year starter. “He didn’t get very many matches in the three weeks leading up to this. I think that hurt him a little bit.”

Butler assistant Fred Powell was named WPIAL Class AAA Assistant Coach of the Year in a vote of the district’s coaches. He received a plaque before the finals.

## **WPIAL AAA Wrestling Championships**

### **Finals**

**107 pounds**-Tanner Mizenko (Canon McMillan) pinned Santino Sloboda (Butler), 2:39

### **5th-6th Place**

**285**-Ethan Babay (Butler) pinned Shepherd Turk (Thomas Jefferson), 3:25

### **7th-8th Place**

**139**-Kase Chopp (Butler) by forfeit over Nathan Monteparte (North Allegheny)

**172**-Nezumiiro Green (Central Catholioc) dec. Matt Zinkhann (Butler), 6-4

**189**-Mickey Kreinbucher (Butler) dec. Evan Letky (North Hills), 7-2

**215**-Landon Christie (Butler) by default over Geno Calgaro (Canon McMillan)

## Butler wrestling comes full circle

### Golden Tornado assistant Powell receives WPIAL award

John Enrietto - Eagle Sports Editor - March 07, 2023



Fred Powell, left, and Butler head wrestling coach Scott Stoner show off the former's WPIAL AAA Assistant Wrestling Coach of the Year Award. Powell received the award by vote of WPIAL coaches. John Enrietto/Butler Eagle

CANONSBURG — The Butler wrestling cycle is complete — yet ongoing. Fred Powell has been a member of the Golden Tornado coaching staff for 14 years. He received the WPIAL Class AAA Assistant Coach of the Year Award prior to the start of the district's tournament finals Saturday at Canon McMillan High School.

Each of the six AAA wrestling sections votes for its Section Assistant Coach of the Year. Those six winners are then voted on by all of the WPIAL coaches to determine the district honor. "It means a lot, coming from a vote of the coaches," Powell said. "But I'm just one guy. We're effective as a staff because we coach the same way and believe in the same things."

Butler head wrestling coach Scott Stoner was voted WPIAL AAA Coach of the Year at the 2022 district tourney. Donnie Geibel was voted WPIAL Junior High Coach of the Year a few years back. "I think it shows the respect our program has gained through the years," Stoner said. "Coach Powell coached me — a guy with marginal talent — at Slippery Rock and helped me succeed at that level. I coached Donnie and now Coach Powell is coaching with me.

"A number of my former wrestlers have come back to serve as assistant coaches in our program. There are a lot of hands in this." Butler graduates Alex Evanoff (Waynesburg) and Blake Caudill (Eastern Michigan) are among the assistant coaches on Butler's staff this season.

"It's a complete program. We work together," Powell said. "I get a lot of enjoyment out of doing this." Powell is in his 70's, but opts to never reveal his age. "That's just a number and I don't want people judging me by that," he said. "My age has nothing to do with what I do or who I am." What Powell does is still get on the mat with Butler wrestlers, demonstrate and execute moves along with explaining them.

"But I'm careful about who I get on them at with these days. I have to be careful," he said, smiling. Powell was a high school state wrestling champion in Virginia. He was SRU head wrestling coach from 1967 through 1991, compiling a record of 215-105-54.

He began coaching with Stoner at Butler as the result of a conversation the two shared while Powell was helping Stoner build his house.

“I asked him if he had interest in coming on board and helping us out,” Stoner recalled. “Coach originally agreed to come to practice once or twice a week. That soon grew into four or five days a week.

“He said he wouldn’t get on a bus and do road matches. Then he started getting on the bus and doing road matches. We are so fortunate to have him. Coach Powell taught me discipline. He led by example. He conducts himself in a way that I try to emulate in my life. “He is very deserving of this award. But it really is a team thing. That’s how we all view it,” Stoner added.



## Sloboda, Chappell reach state quarters

March 10, 2023

HERSHEY — Butler’s Santino Sloboda and Seneca Valley’s Tyler Chappell both advanced to the quarterfinal round of the PIAA Class 3A Wrestling Championships by escaping Thursday’s action unscathed.

Sloboda, the Golden Tornado’s freshman at 107 pounds, defeated Perkiomen Valley’s Max Tancini, 3-0, in his only bout of the day.

A takedown in the first period proved all that Sloboda would need. He will carry a 38-1 record into Friday’s quarterfinal against Altoona’s Braiden Weaver.

Chappell’s day began in the 127-pound preliminary round, where he dispatched Shane McFillin of Bethlehem Catholic with a 6-0 decision.

Chappell then defeated York Suburban’s Tyler Adams, 3-1, in the first round and will meet Hayden Cunningham of State College in the quarterfinals.

SV’s Connor Smith is also still competing. Following a 2-0 preliminary decision over Quakertown’s Isaac Williams at 114 pounds, Smith lost 4-2 to McDowell’s Logan Sallot.

## Sloboda in semifinals

March 11, 2023

Butler freshman Santino Sloboda advanced to the semifinals at 107 pounds during action Friday at the PIAA Wrestling Championships, taking place at the Giant Center in Hershey.

Sloboda (39-1) decisioned Northwest regional champion Braiden Weaver of Altoona, 4-2, in the quarterfinal round. He will wrestle Southeast champion Keanu Dillard (24-0) of Bethlehem Catholic in the semifinal round Saturday morning.

Seneca Valley's Tyler Chappell dropped a 9-4 decision to State College's Hayden Cunningham in the 127-pound quarterfinals. Chappell then took a 6-1 defeat in the consolation round at the hands of Eren Sement of Council Rock North.

Connor Smith, the Raiders' 114-pounder, has won a pair of matches in the consolation round. He decisioned Drew Scherer of Boiling Springs, 5-2, and Cole McFarland of Haverford, 3-0.

## Butler Eagle

# Wrestling builds character

John Enrietto – Eagle Sports Editor - March 11, 2023



Call me biased, but being part of any high school sports team helps that student to develop character. That is extremely true in wrestling. Two prime examples are Butler wrestlers Santino Sloboda and Ethan Babay.

On the surface, they couldn't be more different. Santino is a 107-pound freshman. Ethan is a senior heavyweight. But both have grown in terms of discipline, self-confidence and maturity through their time on the mat.

Santino is completing a remarkable freshman season for the Golden Tornado at the state tournament this weekend. He won his first 37 matches this season — nearly every one in dominant fashion — before getting pinned in the second period of his WPIAL Finals match. The loss was a bit of a shocker. He was the No. 1 seed at his weight class, though he only lost to the No. 2 seed. He left the mat in extreme disappointment, showing a lot of emotion.

Under normal circumstances, as a reporter, I wouldn't think of approaching a high school freshman after such a difficult defeat. Give the kid some space, after all. Then again, this kid is a wrestler. Santino composed himself for the podium photo minutes after the match. As he left the podium, I approached him and asked for an interview, making sure he knew it was OK if he didn't want to talk. We had a conversation about the match, he gave me some insight and I thanked him. This was a high school freshman.

By comparison, when Pitt's basketball team lost a close game to Miami (Fla.), costing the Panthers a share of the Atlantic Coast Conference title, Pitt coach Jeff Capel denied the media access to his players because of the difficulty of their defeat.

That line of thought is understandable as well. But, again, wrestlers are cut from a different cloth. Ethan got a relatively late start in wrestling and did not crack the starting lineup until this season. Jake Pomykata was Butler's starting heavyweight in Ethan's earlier years. The two became good friends and Ethan himself said he learned a lot about self-discipline through practicing with and befriending Jake. In Ethan's only year as a starter, he wound up winning 36

matches, tying the program record with 26 pins, and came within one victory of joining Santino at the state tournament.

This is a kid who stuck with the sport, waited for his opportunity and was ready for it. The storybook ending there would have been a trip to Hershey. Ethan is taking the next best thing. He plans to continue his wrestling career at Fairmont State University next year.

One freshman, one senior. Under different circumstances, both demonstrated mental toughness they gained through wrestling. Great sport. Great kids.

## NOT BAD FOR STARTERS

### Butler freshman Sloboda takes 4th at PIAA Wrestling Championships

John Enrietto - Eagle Sports Editor - March 13, 2023



Butler freshman Santino Sloboda, left, competes at 107 pounds Saturday at the PIAA Wrestling Championships. Sloboda placed fourth in that weight class. Photo Courtesy of Tom Elling 3/13/2023

HERSHEY — Santino Sloboda did not check out of Hershey with a state wrestling championship. But the Butler freshman checked off a lot of boxes this season. Northern Sectional champion. 40 victories. WPIAL 107-pound runner-up. PIAA fourth-place finisher.

“My goals are still to win a state championship and get a Division I scholarship,” Sloboda said. “Getting to experience wrestling in the Giant Center

as a freshman will help me toward that. I was a little nervous out here this weekend. I have to admit that. “But I’ve learned from it.”

Sloboda reached the 107-pound semifinals Saturday, where he ran into undefeated Keanu Dillard (24-0) of Bethlehem Catholic. Dillard scored an 8-2 decision against Sloboda. “That kid is No. 1 ranked in the country at that weight class,” Butler coach Scott Stoner said. “Santino scored the first takedown in that match. It shows where he is as a wrestler. He’s in that neighborhood.” Sloboda (40-3) got into the consolation final with a 2-1 decision of Max Tancini of Perkomen Valley. He decisioned Tancini 3-0 to begin the state tournament. Tancini decisioned Canon McMillan’s Tanner Mizenko — who pinned Sloboda in the WPIAL finals — earlier in the state tourney.

“After that loss (to Dillard), I had to regroup mentally for that next match,” Sloboda said. “I knew it’d be a tough one. Everybody out here is a great wrestler. I feel like I showed I belong. “I had the first takedown (against Dillard), but he had an answer for everything. He’s so polished and knows how to control a match.” Stoner said the Dillard match was closer than the 8-2 score

might indicate. “Santino was trailing and had to try something late,” the coach said. “He got caught and gave up a few late points. But that was a good match.”

Sloboda dropped a 12-1 decision to Colby Martinelli of Pennridge in the consolation final to claim fourth place. He became the third Butler wrestler to ever place at the PIAA meet, joining Cole Baxter (twice) and Christian Sequete, who was the last to do so (2018).

Baxter is the only other Golden Tornado wrestler to win at least 40 matches in a season. He was 33-8 in his freshman season. Sloboda’s 40-3 record is the second-highest winning percentage in program history as well, trailing only Baxter’s 45-2 mark his sophomore season.

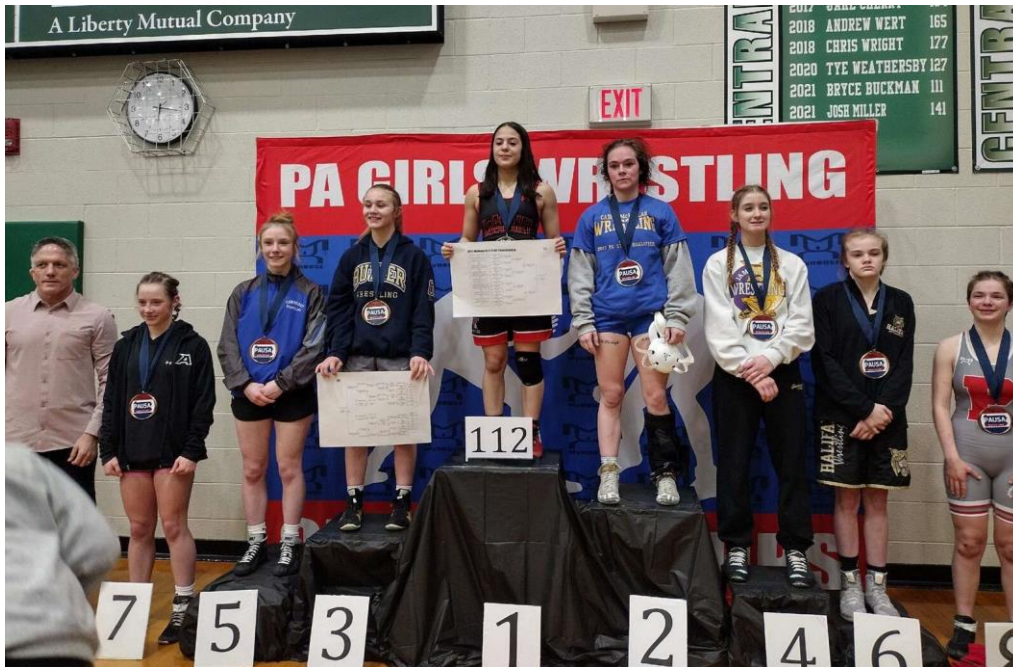
“He put together the best freshman season in our program’s history,” Stoner said. And he wants more. “I walk into the gym every day and see the records, all of those names on the wall,” Sloboda said. “I want to be on top of all of those dudes.”

# Butler Eagle

## Malovich looks to leave her mark

### Butler junior places 3rd at 112 pounds at Pa. Girls Wrestling Tournament

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Butler junior Ana Malovich, third girl from left, stands on the podium after placing third at 112 pounds at the Pa. Girls Wrestling Tournament on Sunday. Submitted Photo

BUTLER TWP — Ana Malovich is prepping for a big finish to her high school wrestling career. The Butler junior isn’t sure in what fashion — or what tournament — that’s going to happen yet.

Malovich, 13-17 wrestling at 114 pounds for the Golden Tornado boys team this season, placed third at 112 pounds in the Pa. Girls Wrestling State Tournament on Sunday at Central Dauphin High School. It was the first time she competed in that tournament.

“It’s been around for three or four years now,” Malovich said of the girls tourney. “I wanted the experience of competing in it this year. It was fun, good competition. I feel like I could have won



it.” She reached the semifinal round, dropping a 4-2 decision to Canon McMillan senior Beth Elliott in that round. Malovich recovered to decision Daylee Watson of Springboro, 12-1, and Madilyn Enterline of Jamestown, 5-0, to take third.

State champion Journie Rodriguez of Lancaster decisioned Elliott, 7-6, in the finals. “Ana is right there,” Butler coach Scott Stoner said. “If they wrestle that same tournament tomorrow, she might beat both of those girls (Elliott and Rodriguez) and win the thing. It was that close.”

Stoner made the 20-minute drive from Hershey to Central Dauphin after coaching Santino Sloboda to a fourth-place finish at 107 pounds in the boys state tourney Saturday. “I got my fill of wrestling that weekend, that’s for sure,” the coach said. “It was well worth it, seeing both of our wrestlers place and do so well.

“I’m not sure what Ana’s plans are moving forward. There’s enough schools in Pennsylvania with girls wrestling teams now that the state will sanction the sport. But we won’t have a (girls) team in place by next year and I’m not sure when a girls schedule statewide will be formally organized.”

Malovich does have options. She could join a high school girls team at another school next season or continue with the Butler’s boys team. “I haven’t decided whether to wrestle in the girls tournament again next year or not,” she said. “All I know is I want to help create a bigger name for female wrestling. I want to do my part.”

Through three seasons on the Butler boys team, Malovich has put together a 51-34 career high school record. While 17 of those wins have come via forfeit, she has also won 23 matches by pin-fall. The state record of 89 career wins by a female high school wrestler appears out of reach, but a productive senior season with the Golden Tornado is a distinct possibility.

“I’m really hoping she stays with us,” Stoner said. “If Ana is able to wrestle at 109 pounds, with Santino moving up a weight class or two, it would strengthen our lineup. She’d be a senior with experience wrestling against younger opponents.

“Her and I have talked about it ... Ana would get an early takedown on an opponent, then tend to back off and wrestle more conservatively. Honestly, I feel like she could have had a few more wins.” Malovich went 6-0 at the Virginia Duals this season, including wins over a couple of Virginia state placers. A 107-pound wrestler from Northwestern High School this year became the first female in PIAA history to reach the boys state tournament (Class AA) and won a couple of matches there.

“I was impressed with how well-coached and fundamentally strong the girls were at their state tournament,” Stoner said. “They are making their mark in this sport and it’s great to see.” Pennsylvania now has 103 high schools with girls wrestling teams. “I still want to wrestle in college and beyond. I want to do this for a long time,” Malovich said.

She’s not taking any time off, either. Malovich is wrestling in two tournaments in April, will wrestle in Virginia Beach in May, Tulsa (Okla.) in June, Fargo (N.D.) in July and in North Carolina in October. “It’s a busy schedule, but my body’s conditioned for it,” Malovich said. “I’m used to this.”