

# WPIAL Class AAA Championships

## *Ben Amrhein Advances to State Championships*

**March 7, 2010 by Rick Smith** – After a one year hiatus, North Hills will be sending another wrestler to Hershey for the PIAA Class AAA State Championships. Senior 160-pounder Ben Amrhein won four of his five bouts over the three-day WPIAL Class AAA Championships held at Canon-McMillan High School, earning third place in his bracket and a trip to Chocolatetown, USA!

Amrhein, now 38-6 this season, began his quest during Thursday evening's preliminary round with an 11-3 major decision over McGuffey's Brent Blacharczyk. In Friday's quarterfinal bout, the West Point recruit recorded four takedowns on his way to a 10-7 victory over Hopewell's Brian Foy. After dropping a 6-3 decision in his semifinal match on Saturday with Bethel Park's Nick Bonaccorsi, Amrhein bounced back with a 3-2 thriller over Penn-Trafford's Trevor Gibson, scoring the winning escape early in the ultimate tie breaker period.

The consolation semifinal victory over Gibson landed Amrhein in the consolation final bout. Not surprisingly, North Allegheny sophomore Jared Lux was the opponent. The two combatants had split their two previous meetings this season with Lux winning a 5-2 decision in a dual meet between the two teams on January 20<sup>th</sup> and Amrhein winning the Section 3 title last Saturday night, riding out the talented youngster for the full 30 seconds of the ultimate tie breaker period to unknit a 5-5 deadlock. The rubber match would hold the most significance, however, deciding whose season would continue and who would stay home.

After a scoreless first period, Amrhein jumped out to a 3-1 lead by scoring an escape and a takedown during the second period. Lux escaped early in the third period to cut Amrhein's lead to one point, but Amrhein dominated the remainder of the bout, taking Lux down twice on his way to a 7-3 decision.

Nearly joining Amrhein in Hershey was 119-pounder Cameron Weber. After pinning Ringgold's Alex Powell in the third period of his preliminary round bout on Thursday and securing a hard fought 9-7 decision over Elizabeth Forward's Jake Diana in Friday's quarterfinals, Weber was pinned early in the second period of his semifinal contest on Saturday by Penn State recruit Nico Megaludis of Franklin Regional. Weber rebounded with a 2-1 decision over Canon-McMillan's Dario Dobbin in the consolation semifinals, but fell just short with a 4-2 loss to McGuffey's Alex Dunaway in the consolation final. Weber finishes his senior season with an outstanding 37-8 record and is tied with 1996-graduate Chris Fertig for sixth place on North Hills' all-time wins list with 109 career victories.

Three Indians placed among the top twelve wrestlers in their brackets. Freshman Tyler Walker (112 pounds) won two bouts during the tournament and finished his season with a solid 26-17 record. Mike Dietrich (285) and T.J. McElwaine (215) both won a match during Thursday's competition. Dietrich finished his senior season with a 30-13 record, recording the most single-season wins by a heavyweight in North Hills' history. McElwaine's 106 career wins lands him in eighth place on the all-time North Hills' victory list following an exceptional 36-5 senior campaign.

Also competing for the Indians were senior Ryan Gibson (25-17 this season at 140 pounds), junior Troy Zangaro (20-17 at 130), and freshmen Drew Walker (29-11 at 133) and Alen Turcinhodzic (12-17 at 171).

North Hills finished in 18<sup>th</sup> place at the 51-team tournament with 38 team points. Ben Amrhein led the way with 15 points, while Cameron Weber tallied 13. Also chipping in for the Indians were Tyler Walker (5 Points), Mike Dietrich (4), and T.J. McElwaine (1). Canon-McMillan won an extremely tight team point race with 102.5 to take the title. Connellsville was second with 101.5 points and Pittsburgh Central Catholic finished in third place with 101.

The state championship tournament begins this Thursday, March 11<sup>th</sup> at the GIANT Center in Hershey. Sixteen wrestlers from every corner of the state will compete in each weight class. Amrhein's 160-pound bracket features two-time defending state champion and Cornell recruit Marshall Poppelman of Central Dauphin High School.

Alex Martinez and Adam Harold were the latest North Hills' grapplers to make the trip east to Chocolatetown, USA at the end of the 2007-08 season.

Check back for a link to the brackets and more information about the state championships.

**Best of luck to Ben Amrhein in Hershey!**