

Danbury's Costanzo wins New England wrestling title

By Kevin Duffy, Staff Writer

Published: 11:51 p.m., Saturday, March 6, 2010

NEW HAVEN -- Danbury High wrestler **Charlie Costanzo** is plenty familiar with the New England Championship plaque.

In fact, he had one mailed to his house two years ago.

Costanzo, a 5-1 loser in the 2008 New England finals at 119 pounds, was awarded the New England title when his opponent, **Kenny Anderson** (Billerica, Mass.), was later disqualified for reasons unrelated to the match.

Needless to say, the plaque didn't stay too long at the **Costanzo house**.

"I took it right to the post office and mailed it to (Anderson)," Costanzo said. "He beat me fair and square. He deserved it. There was no way I was keeping it."

Costanzo got his hands on another New England Championship plaque. on Saturday. And this one's not going anywhere.

Costanzo defeated **Corey Melo** (New Bedford, Mass.) 5-1 in the 119-pound final.

"To finally get this," Costanzo said. "To finally get this -- something I've wanted so badly since freshman year. Nothing compares to it. Nothing."

And, according to Danbury coach **Rick Shook**, no one -- at least in the history of Danbury wrestling -- compares to Costanzo.

"As far as accomplishments go, he's the best we've ever had," Shook said. "Without a doubt."

"I'm just as happy as he is," Shook continued. "He's worked his butt off to get here. He's a hard, hard-working kid, and all the work he put it, it's paid off."

Costanzo, who advanced to the finals with a 6-4 overtime decision over Shoneil Lariviere (Cumberland, R.I.), found himself trailing 1-0 early in the finals against Melo.

He didn't panic, though.

Instead, Costanzo earned two points on a takedown with four seconds remaining in the second period, earned another point for an escape early in the third and finished Melo off with a takedown in the closing seconds.

Costanzo now has a career record of 162-22 and three State Open titles to go along with the New England Championship plaque he earned Saturday.

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As a team, Danbury placed 6th overall, which ends a roller-coaster season in which the Hatters won the State Open title and saw two seemingly endless streaks -- a 262-match run versus in-state opponents and a 23-year FCIAC Championship reign -- come to an end. Timberlane (N.H.) was the overall team champion.

New Milford's Connor Kirkegard, a sophomore who won the Class L title at 103 pounds, took fourth place Saturday.

"I've always wanted to win New England's ever since I was a little kid," Kirkegard said. "So I have two more years to accomplish that goal."

Likewise, New Fairfield's [Jesse Broderick](#) claimed fourth at 152 pounds.

Broderick's familiar foe at 152, [Andrew Ford](#) of Bethel, entered as one of the favorites after he won Class M and State Open titles in back-to-back weeks. Ford, however, was ousted in the quarterfinals by Matt Dehney (Dracut, Mass) and then withdrew due to injury after two victories -- a pin and an 8-3 decision -- in the consolation bracket.

TOP-10 TEAM RESULTS: 1. 89.0 Timberlane (N.H.) 89; 2. Burlington (Mass.) 75.5; 3. Cumberland (R.I.) 69; 4. Pinkerton Acad (N.H.) 58.5; 5. Haverhill (Mass.) 57; 6. Danbury 50.5; 7. Tyngsboro (Mass.) 47; 8. Cent Catholic (Mass.) 43; 9. Framingham (Mass.) 42; 10. Shawsheen (Mass). 41.5.

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