

# Tigers hope strong offseason equates to victories on mat

by **PATRICK J. NAGY**  
Reporter

A good offseason will hopefully turn around the fortunes of the Amherst wrestling team.

Last year, the Tigers finished 1-7 in ECIC Division II, 1-16 overall.

"We had one of our best off-seasons in years," said Amherst coach Dennis Bauer. "Most of the returning wrestlers attended camp over the summer and wrestled in our club. I was expecting 15 kids to come back; we have 29 on the roster."

Bauer thinks the 2007-08 team is more balanced than the 2006-07 squad.

"Last year was frustrating because we had a lot of kids who had talent and experience and then we had kids with nothing," said Bauer. "We had no kids in the middle. This year, I think we're much more centered. Our good is not that good but our bad is a little more advanced. We're also a little more together as a team. The new kids are also picking things up fast so we don't have to slow down for them."

The team will be led by tri-captains, senior Matt Weber and juniors Pete Battaglia and Corey Damon. Weber, a four-year varsity wrestler, has the most experience coming back and will wrestle at 152 pounds. He also won the 145-pound division at the Maryvale Varsity Invitational late last year. Battaglia and Damon are also returning wrestlers and should go at either 189 or 215 pounds.

Bauer loves Weber's effort. "He never stops wrestling no matter what point of the match it is," said Bauer. "He also has ability, strength and good technique."

Other returning wrestlers are juniors Kory and Kreig Roche, Nick Hernandez and Brian Rice and sophomore Gabe Graves. The Roche brothers are vying for the starting spot at 145 pounds.

Hernandez and Rice are in the mix at 160 and 171. Graves is working at 275.

Senior first-year grappler Mark Tarquini is also trying to get a starting spot at 171.

The rest of the lineup looks like freshman Max Legierski or sophomore first-year wrestler Nick Pantano (112); Legierski, Pantano or first-year wrestler, junior Matt Schillinger (119); sophomores Pat Donovan or Nick Celano or junior Ben Brown (125 or 130); sophomore Sean Cunningham (135) and freshman Josh Kapus (140). Legierski and Kapus are up from modified.

Bauer lauded the work of modified coach Stefan Henn for getting modified kids ready for varsity. Amherst alum Steve Lachut coaches JV and is assisted by Ron Parker.

Bauer said top sophomores on the team are Celano, Donovan and Cunningham. He's also excited about Brown, who he said had a good freshman year.

Bauer feels ECIC II is going to be tough again and feels Cheektowaga will be the favorite.

To compete in the league, Bauer said his team has to focus on winning close matches by not giving up pins and finishing matches strong.

Amherst opened its season in the Orchard Park Tournament on Saturday. (see other story). They lost 47-27 to Frontier on Monday.

"We're ready to get rolling," said Bauer. "The kids have been super positive and focused."

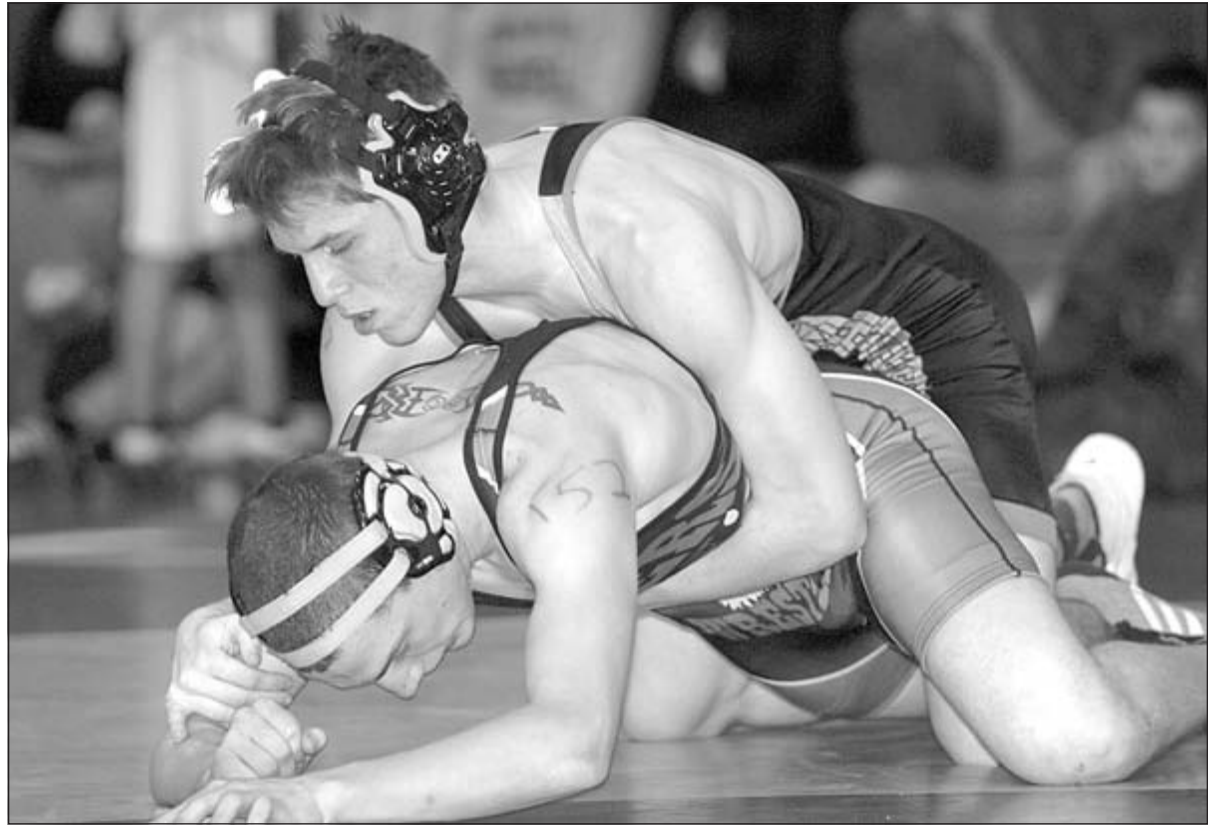
**Amherst 2007 Schedule**  
12-8 at Grand Island Dual Tournament ..... 9 a.m.  
12-12 at Pioneer..... 6 p.m.  
12-14 at Iroquois..... 6 p.m.  
12-18 at St. Joe's..... 7 p.m.  
12-28 at Maryvale Tournament (Maryvale) ..... 9 a.m.  
1-9 at W.S. East..... 6 p.m.  
1-11 at Lockport Tournament (Lockport) ..... 9 a.m.  
1-12 at Lockport Tournament (Lockport) ..... 9 a.m.  
1-16 at Starpoint..... 6 p.m.

1-18 at ECIC Tournament (East Aurora) ..... 4:30 p.m.  
1-19 at ECIC Tournament (East Aurora) ..... 9 a.m.  
1-23 Cheektowaga..... 7 p.m.  
1-26 at Pete Rao Varsity Tourna-

ment (Lewiston-Porter)... 9 a.m.  
1-30 East..... 7 p.m.  
2-1 Lake Shore..... 7 p.m.  
2-6 South..... 7 p.m.  
2-15 at Class AAA Tournament (Starpoint) ..... 4:30 p.m.

2-16 at Class AAA Tournament (Starpoint) ..... 4:30 p.m.  
2-23 Section VI New York State qualifier (Ken West)..... 10 a.m.

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Amherst's Matt Weber, top, won the 152-pound division at the Orchard Park Tournament last Saturday. Weber is the Tigers' top returning wrestler.

Photo by John Normile

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## Weber wins at OP Tournament

Amherst Central senior Matt Weber won the 152-pound weight class at last Saturday's 22nd Orchard Park Invitational JV and Varsity Tournament.

Weber beat Grand Island's Nick Gugino in the finals.

Weber scored first by takedown in the first period with Gugino closing the gap to 2-1 with an escape. After a scoreless second period, Weber was able to score three points in the third to seal the victory.

In the semifinals, Weber wrestled top-seeded Dylan Geertman of Akron. Weber took Geertman to his back twice in the match, earning an impressive 12-2 victory.

In the first round, Weber beat He Zemming of Kenmore West, 3-0, scoring an escape and a take-

down in the third period.

Junior Corey Damon wrestled well at 189, going 2-2.

On the JV side, sophomore Nick Pantano and freshman Tom Trabert took second and third at 112 pounds. It was Pantano's first ever competitive match.

Sophomore Sean Cunningham placed second at 135, winning his first two matches in overtime then losing in the finals in the last 30 seconds.

Sophomore 160-pounder Brian Rice pinned each of his opponents to place first. Junior 215-pounder Rafael Manzo went 3-1 to place third.

"We were very excited with the way all of our wrestlers, new and experienced, wrestled," said Amherst coach Dennis Bauer.

## Boys basketball

### New players step up for Sweet Home, South

by **PATRICK J. NAGY**  
Reporter

The Sweet Home and Williamsville South boys basketball teams are debuting a ton of new players on the court this season. But judging by their season-opening wins last week, neither team has missed a beat.

Sweet Home, who returns one starter and four players overall from its Section VI Class AA championship team, routed Niagara-Wheatfield, 67-41, at home last Saturday. South, which lost all but two players from its Section VI Class A finalist squad, edged Hutch-Tech at home, 65-57.

Sweet Home coach Paul Schintzius and South coach Al Monaco each were happy with their teams' debuts.

"We have a lot of new faces who stepped up and did a nice job," said Schintzius.

"It was a very satisfying win because I started two freshmen and a sophomore," said Monaco. "The team is going to get better and better."

Schintzius said the blueprint for his team's success over the last

few years (Sweet Home won the Section VI Class A title in 2006) has been holding teams under 50 points a game, and that's exactly what they did to the Falcons. The Panthers were ahead, 16-11, after the first quarter, 37-19 at halftime, and 54-24 after three quarters.

"The biggest thing we have been focusing on in training camp was playing good defense," said Schintzius. "The kids bought into it and held them to 24 points through three quarters. It carried us on offense."

Ten Panthers scored, led by 18 points each from seniors Brian Pappagallo and Ali Ramdan.

It was Pappagallo's first time starting at point guard.

"I thought he was dynamite," said Schintzius. "I figured he would be jittery with it being his first start, but he did a good job at both ends of the floor. On defense, he had his hands on a lot of deflections."

Senior shooting guard Jamel Werts, also a new starter, scored all 12 of his points in the first half.

It doesn't get any easier for the Panthers (1-0), who play

Rochester East at 7 p.m. on Friday as part of the Cataract Classic at Niagara Falls High School and Canisius at 8 p.m. on Tuesday at St. Mary's of Lancaster in the ECIC-MMA Challenge. Sweet Home beat Rochester East two years ago in the Cataract Classic.

Four underclassmen came up huge to secure South an opening-game win.

Freshmen Phil Stasiak and Joe Licata scored 18 and 14 points, respectively, and Aaron Adams, another freshman, hit a three-pointer and two free throws with 4:30 left in the game to break a 49-49 tie and maintain the Bilibies' victory. Adams, who played modified last year, also came off the bench and drained a three in the first quarter to spark South's offense.

Sophomore point guard Mark Coppola, the only returning starter, scored seven of the team's last 11 points. He finished with 12 points and nine assists.

"They were composed and confident," said Monaco. "Their basketball instincts really showed on Friday night."

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