

## ESG — Gymnastics

## Molnar guarantees gold for scholastic men

by MATT KRUEGER  
Reporter

Dan Molnar left nothing to interpretation a week before his Western Region scholastic men's team took to the Empire State Games.

"We're going to win the team gold medal," Molnar said confidently amidst a wave of bounding gymnasts at Stumpf's Gymnastics

Center in Williamsville.

Some may consider that a bold statement, until you look at the roster. Six of the seven boys return from last year's team, which won the gold medal by an astounding nine-point margin.

"It's bold, but I think it's reality as far as I'm concerned," said Molnar. "I know my team this year. I've got five guys that made Nationals this year. They're too

strong."

Western could very well take the top three places of the all-around competition, as Cheektowaga's Aaron Benson, East Amherst's Jonathan Zirna and Grand Island's Jimmy Pezzino are expected to challenge for the title. Zirna is new to the team this year, but Benson finished second in the all-around last year and Pezzino finished sixth.

Western also has Williamsville's Cody Stumpf (seventh in all-around last year), Nathaniel Roberson and Noah Roberson and Clarence Center's Michael Wozniak.

"These guys have experience," Molnar said. "They've been there before. Every one of them can handle the pressure. For them, it's a fun meet. They go out there and enjoy themselves. That just makes it even sweeter."

Benson is eager to defend his gold medal on rings, after adding an iron cross and a new dismount to his routine. Benson also won silver medals on high bar and pommel horse last year and is looking to upgrade to gold in the all-around.

"I think I have some tough competition this year, but if I have the best meet I can have, I don't see why I can't win," he said.

#### Open Men

The open men's team was the only Western squad to not win a team gold medal last year, finishing second to New York City by more than six points.

But with a loaded lineup of high-level gymnasts, including Keith Stumpf, Michael Morse, Kenneth Byrd and Harrison Reisweber, Western is looking to vault back into the lead the the Empire State Games.

"Every year is a little bit of a challenge," coach Joe Buscaglia said. "Scholastic usually has a core of guys, but open changes a little bit. You never know what college kids are coming back. This year, I feel really strong, because we have a couple college kids coming back. Keith is back from Springfield, Harrison went to Springfield, and Kenny Byrd is at Brockport. Our chances are great. We definitely can win."

Stumpf had a disappointing fin-

ish in the all-around competition last year, taking fifth, but he won the pommel horse and finished second on floor.

"I had a good year at college," he said. "I learned a lot of new skills. I'm hoping to use them and place better than I did last year."

Morse won the Section VI all-around title this past year, while Reisweber is a former Section VI champion.

Rounding out the roster are Depew's Joe Conti and Cory Kowalski and Buffalo's Lui Ibrahim.

#### Open Women

The open women's team is the three-time defending champ at the Empire State Games, but this my very well be the deepest, most talented squad Western has ever fielded.

Western returns four girls, Williamsville's Kristina Arcury, Lancaster's Courtney Connors, Buffalo Kayla Gray and Penfield's Alexandra Kourbatova, from last year's team that won gold by a one-point margin. Arcury is a two-time Section VI all-around champion, while Connors finished first at the tryouts.

Western also has Fairport's Sarah Moore, Hamburg's Nicole Radon and Lewiston Jenna Vandusen.

"This is one of our strongest teams ever, coach Kurt Stumpf said. "It's as good as last year's team, and it might even be better. We have a little more depth. We are seven girls deep, all the way to the bottom. We really are strong this year. We're pretty well balanced all the way through. Everyone is pretty close in level."

#### Scholastic Women

The scholastic women's team  
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## 'Major East' Yankees complete undefeated playoff run

It took a little bit of everything for the Mathewson McCarthy Yankees to complete an undefeated playoff run and top the Mets, 9-8, for the "Majors East" title.

Strong pitching early on by the Yankees' Ryen Seyfried and the Mets' Justin Bailey left a slim 1-0 Yankee lead.

The middle two innings produced 11 runs, with the lead changing back and forth four times. The Mets' Francisco McGowan and Josh Barrett came through big with two runs and two hits each.

The Yankees' Josh Jager and Brett Baker knocked in runs and Andrew Wolf, Chris Fancher and Ryan Cronin scored.

Austin Collins had a big catch in center field and Rick Procknal snagged a sharp grounder at third to end a bases loaded threat.

Tied 7-7, Ryan Majewski faced the top of the Mets' order in the fifth. He was on target, striking out three and leaving his team only one run down. The Yankees took the lead and brought in ace Chris Ossa to pitch the sixth. He retired the first two batters then watched a grounder fielded by Justin Beck at short. Beck gunned it to Majewski at first for the last out and the championship.

To advance to the championship,



The Yankees went undefeated in the Mathewson McCarthy playoffs to become champions of the "Majors East" division. Members pictured from left, are: first row - Austin Collins and Ryen Seyfried; second row - Rick Procknal, Brett Baker, Andrew Wolf, Josh Jager, Ryan Cronin, Coach Dennis Fancher; third row - Chris Ossa, Ryan Majewski, Coach David Jager, Zach Fancher, Justin Beck, Manager Mark Procknal, Chris Fancher, and Coach Kevin Baker.

the Yankees beat the Braves, 8-6, in a semifinal contest.

Ossa pitched a two-hitter over five strong innings, striking out nine. Justin Beck and Seyfried had two hits each, driving in four runs. Andrew

Wolf drove in Zach Fancher for the winning run.

The Braves had strong games from Steven Zaprowski and Doug Murphy, who combined for three hits and three runs.

## ESG — Wrestling

## Scholastic, open grapplers ready to make impact

by CRAIG KANALLEY  
Intern

Jacob Winnie of Clarence High School will be one of 27 Buffalo area wrestlers travelling to Binghamton this week for the Empire

State Games.

Winnie will wrestle for the Western Region scholastic team at 165 pounds in the Greco-Roman and freestyle competitions.

"I think it's going to be a lot fun," said the soon-to-be junior. "It's my

first time going (to the Empire State Games), but I've heard it's a lot of fun, good competition and a really cool experience."

Winnie said he's been training hard this summer, both for the Games and for next school year.

"One day I wrestle, one day I go to N-Trip (Niagara County Community College), one day I do open mats, so right now I'm pretty much doing something every day," he said.

He added that he's also been going to summer camps.

Last year, Winnie was the captain of Clarence's varsity team, which won the Lockport Tournament. He also plays soccer for the Red Devils.

He'll join Clarence graduate and East Amherst resident Alex Siedlecki at the Games. Siedlecki, who currently wrestles at Brown University, is a former two-time Western New York Champion who will be participating in the 187-pound competition at the Games. Winnie and Siedlecki know each other well and have been practicing together recently to prepare for the Games.

Winnie said he's not necessarily looking for a medal.

"I just want to have fun, that's what I'm going there to do," he said. "I'll probably be more competitive next year, but this year I'm just going to have fun and see what it's like."

He added that his primary focus this offseason has been on next school year. His goal is to place in sectionals next season.

Other local high school athletes

set to compete in scholastic wrestling at the Games include: Dylan Caruana of Kenmore West (98 pounds, freestyle and Greco-Roman); Jordan McGregor of Tonawanda (106 pounds, freestyle and Greco-Roman); Kyle McGregor of Tonawanda (115 pounds, freestyle and Greco Roman); Scott McGregor of Tonawanda (123 pounds, Greco-Roman); Clay Reeb of Cheektowaga (154 pounds, freestyle); Clint Schaefer of Lancaster (154 pounds, Greco-Roman); Nathan Skiba of Kenmore West (154 pounds, freestyle); and Jonathan Draves of West Seneca East (165 pounds, freestyle).

In the open division, Elma resident Matt Mariacher, who just finished his freshman year at American University in Washington D.C., plans to participate in the 139-pound freestyle and 128-pound Greco-Roman competitions.

Mariacher graduated from Iroquois High School, where he finished his senior year with an unblemished 48-0 record and a New York State title. This will be his fourth trip to the Games.

"It's a lot of fun with all the guys from around the state," he said. "You recognize all these names from back in high school, and it's

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## Men's

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more native Jordan Rickan, Lockport natives Katie Taber (High Point University) and Heather Rhodes (Midland University), Grand Island native Jessica Kuehne (Siena College) and North Tonawanda native Ashley Beamish (Seton Hall) make up the Buffalo-based portion of the roster.

"We had a bunch of players who had been on the team for five, six, even seven years move on and not come out this year, but I still don't think even that will take us out of the running," coach Rickan said. "We're going to win even if we are short a player or two."

Coach Rickan and Western's players know that

they are going to face an uphill battle to keep its string of earning at least a bronze medal since 2000 alive — Western has posted three golds, two silvers and three bronze finishes since the turn of the century — but they are looking forward to the challenge.

"We're going to face some very strong competition," coach Rickan said. "New York City is always good and Adirondack should be extremely strong. But we're going down there to win, no matter what our roster looks like."

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## TRYOUTS

Empire United Soccer Academy (formerly Buffalo United) is holding tryouts July 21 through August 11, for boys and girls ages 8 to 18. Please check our website for specific dates, times and information.

www.EmpireUnitedSA.org

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