

Kent Island and South Carroll End 1A/2A State Tournament Knotted Up

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Rare Occurrence Hasn't Happened Since 1986

For only the second time since there have been two divisions at the Maryland State Tournament two teams ended the action tied atop the standings. Kent Island and South Carroll both tallied 94 points over the two day event at Cole Field House. Oakland Mills and Wicomico were the first to do it almost 30 years ago in 1986.

For Kent Island it is yet another feather in their cap, putting an exclamation mark on the most successful campaign in school history. In February, they won the first state title in school history when they defeated Hereford 35-33 to win the 1A/2A State Duals Championship.

"I'm fine with that (the tie)," Kent Island Coach Rusty Smith said. "We won the bigger crown too in my opinion, which is the state duals. That was our hopes to win the state duals title."

"This is icing on the cake for us though. Kent Island High School got their first state champion today. We wanted a state champion; we haven't ever had one so that was our goal."

Stevan Smith (No.7 in the latest rankings by the Maryland State Wrestling Association) won the 132lb title with a 5-2 decision over Liberty's Joe Kuegler (No.8) to accomplish that goal for the Buccaneers.

"It feels good to achieve something I've worked so hard for," Smith added. "It's an honor to be Kent Island's first State Champion."

In addition to Smith, Kent Island had three other wrestlers reach the podium. No.11 Colton Smith (152) grabbed a silver medal, No.7 Zach Smith (145) took home bronze, and Justin Messersmith (126, No.13) placed fourth.

South Carroll had five grapplers win awards, a tournament high, to push them to the top of the standings alongside Kent Island.

"It's fantastic, to come here with the group we brought and to step up and peak at the right time was great to watch," said South Carroll Coach Bryan Hamper. "Jake capping off his senior year the way he did, it's a great story. The kid has diabetes and trains very hard. For him to be able to do what he has to do on and off the mat, it's fantastic to watch him cap it off with a dominating win."

"A lot of people didn't realize we were five starters out in our dual meet lineup all year long due to injuries. We knew as long as we could get healthy at the right time we would be able to peak at the end of the year. We knew we had the big guys that could come here and do very well."

No.4 Jake Pooton was the Cavaliers' lone champion, and he came through in a big way. Both of Kent Island's finalists had already taken the mat when Pooton came out for his bout against Fallston's Austin Rutkowski (No.13).

The Buccaneers were up by five points, meaning Pooton needed a major-decision to tie the team score. Pooton was in control of the match from the beginning and was able to gain the major-decision with a 9-1 win. The win also gave Pooton his first state title.

"I worked for it for 11 years, since I was seven," Pooton said. "That's all I've been thinking about, step by step, practice by practice. I worked hard and I finally got there. It was my goal for all my life. It felt awesome, it's great!"

"Before the match I was thinking that. I was like man, I gotta get at least a major, help the team out. When I was up 9 nothing, I gave up that escape. I was like man, I can't give up one more point. I'm not going to be able to sleep tonight. It's the best feeling in the world."

Tim Null (113, No.6) placed second, No.12 Joey Thomas (106) was third, Wade Slatniske (170, No.21) came in fourth, and heavyweight Brady Scales finished in fifth place for South Carroll.

Third place Mountain Ridge posted 74.5 points. The Miners had four grapplers take home awards including one champion, No.3 Adam Martz (152).

Martz was sharp and dominated his match with Kent Island's Colton Smith. He cruised to his second state title with an 11-4 win. The junior won a state title as a freshman, but finished as a runner-up last year to Catocin's Charlie Perella.

"I worked hard. I worked for the moment," said Martz. "I tried my hardest in practice, gave it everything I got, acting like it was the state championship. I'm very pleased. I think I beat him like 11-4. My goal was to major him, but I tried."

"(Last year) just made me work harder. It truly just, it put the little burst in my head that someone's working harder than me and I have to work harder. I do extra just for that moment."

No.11 Cody Matthews (120) placed third for Mountain Ridge. No.18 Tyler Maynard (160) and No.16 Austin Clark (195) took fourth to round out the Miners' place-winners.

Catocin was fourth with 70 points. The Cougars had three grapplers earn spots on the award stand, including two champions; Wayne Wivell (138, No.12) and No.4 Perella (145). Pat Guilday (152, No.7) finally earned a state placing as a senior with a fourth place finish.

Wivell, who transferred from Fairfield High School (Pennsylvania), was part of one of the more entertaining bouts of the finals. He was facing former state champion Tejon Anthony (Western Tech, No.7), and the fireworks started almost immediately.

Anthony definitely didn't come out with any reservations. He started pushing the action early and often. Wivell was able to counter most of Anthony's moves which resulted in some exciting scrambles that Wivell was able to come out on top of. The pace was extreme throughout the bout which ended at the 5:29 mark of the third period when Wivell put Anthony to his back in the midst of one of those scrambles and registered a fall.

"(There were) a lot of five point moves," Wivell said. "I feel like I executed our game plan before the match pretty well actually. Maryland's got just as tough athletes in every weight class. It's just who shows up to wrestle that day. It (winning the title) hasn't hit me yet, but I'm excited."

Perella had to work overtime to capture his second consecutive crown. Last year he pinned Martz in the finals, but this year he went the distance and more with Calvert's Justin Couto (No.6) before picking up a takedown in overtime for the 7-5 win.

"He's a good kid, a tough kid," Perella added. "I knew he was going to come after me, but I kept pushing. I wanted to try and set the pace of the match. He reversed me once, but I know how to win so I did what I had to do and got the takedown. It (winning the second title) feels much better."

Middletown (67.5 points) rounded out the top five and crowned one champion among their four placers. Super freshman Danny Bertoni (No.4) ended his undefeated campaign with a 4-0 decision over Southern Garrett's Devan Hamrick (No.5) to claim the 106lb championship.

Grabbing a bronze medal for the Knights was No.11 Tucker Ziegler (160), while Brennan Lincoln (113, No.21) and Josh Grossnickle (120, No.23) came in fifth.

Southern Garrett's Austin Shaffer (No.1 at 113) defeated Null 9-5 and came away with the second state title of his career. Shaffer was third last year as a junior, after winning a title as a sophomore.

"Last year was frustrating for me but you can't dwell on that," Shaffer said. "You just gotta push past it and get ready for the next year and that's what I did. I feel pretty good about it. It's always exciting to become a Maryland State Champion."

After being a runner-up as a sophomore and junior, Chris Brown (Perryville, No.4) finally got to taste victory in the state finals. He blanked Snow Hill's Camden Fischer (No.9) 3-0 to win the 120lb crown.

"It feels great to be a champ, but I don't think the feelings really set in yet," said Brown. "I think it's going to take a while until the final fulfillment of it really takes place. I've been wrestling pretty good all tournament. Senior year, last match I'm ever gonna wrestle in high school, figured I'd leave it all on the mat. Give it all I got and that's what I went out there and did."

Oakdale's Anthony Savage (No.1) closed out his career with a second straight state championship. He beat No.18 Justin Opel (Northern Garrett) 5-1 in a rematch of the West Region final which he won 11-8.

"It definitely doesn't feel like the first one," Savage added. "(It) feels kinda like the same in a way, but it feels a little more satisfying. I dominated the match. I didn't give him a chance to really score on me. I feel like I did very, very well in the last match."

No.7 Jaron Smith (Oakland Mills) got a bit of revenge in his 160lb title bout against No.6 Wes Dantzler (Century). Dantzler beat Smith 6-3 in a dual meet earlier in the season. This time things would be different, as the junior took control of the match early on and went on to register an 8-2 win.

"I feel great, you know it's unbelievable," Smith said. "He's a great wrestler, last time he caught me in a couple things. I wasn't feeling at my best in that match. It felt great to be able to get a second shot because most losses you take, you're not able to avenge that year."

North Carroll's Eddie Merrill (170, No.4) ended his career by securing his first state title. The senior finished as a runner-up last year so it made the 7-2 win over No.7 Justin Peacock (Kent) all the more gratifying.

"Awesome, amazing, better than anything else," said Merrill. "I feel fine with it (the match), I mean I did play a little defense at the end, but you're up by five in the state finals who's not gonna do that. I wasn't going to walk out of here with second again."

Queen Annes' Matt Olauson (195, No.2) grabbed his second consecutive championship with a workman like performance, picking up a 15-7 major-decision over Smithburg's sophomore Bryce Scott (No.13).

"I was a little nervous about it. I didn't know the guys in the tournament," Olauson said. "I knew I would be pushed this weekend. I wanted to stay focused and not get caught. I had to wrestle better every match."

"The Smithsburg kid was beating some of the kids that I only beat by a few points. He looked good and I knew it was going to be a good match. It feels great knowing all my hard work paid off and I want to keep building our school up. I can't describe how it feels."

No.12 Brock Turnbaugh (Hereford) claimed his first state title with an 11-6 win over Patterson Mill's Eric Eckstein (No.15). Turnbaugh defeated state runner-up Jake Utz (Winters Mill, No.7) 3-1 in the semi-finals.

Heavyweight Brion Blades (North Caroline, No.4) was another first time champion. The senior closed out his career in grand fashion pinning Fallston's Alex Helm (No.8) at the 1:42 mark of the first period. Blades pinned all of his opponents this weekend, with only one making it out of the first period (Queen Annes Tommy Jones).

Team Scores (Top 15)

1. South Carroll, 94
- Tie-Kent Island, 94
3. Mountain Ridge, 74.5
4. Catoclin, 70
5. Middletown, 67.5
6. Oakland Mills, 65
7. Hereford, 61
8. North Caroline, 60
9. Williamsport, 55.5
10. Southern Garret, 51.5
- Tie-Oakdale, 51.5
12. Fallston, 46
- Tie-Patterson Mill, 46
14. Western Tech, 45
15. Owings Mills, 42

Championship Finals

- 106-Danny Bertoni (Middletown) dec Devan Hamrick (Southern Garrett), 4-0
113-Austin Shaffer (Southern Garrett) dec Tim Null (South Carroll), 9-5
120-Chris Brown (Perryville) dec Camden Fischer (Snow Hill), 3-0
126-Anthoney Savage (Oakdale) dec Justin Opel (Northern Garrett), 5-1
132-Stevan Smith (Kent Island) dec Joe Kuegler (Liberty), 5-2
138-Wayne Wivell (Catoclin) pinned Tejon Anthony (Western Tech), 5:29
145-Charlie Perella (Catoclin) dec Josh Couto (Calvert), 7-5 OT
152-Adam Martz (Mountain Ridge) dec Colton Smith (Kent Island), 11-4
160-Jaron Smith (Oakland Mills) dec Wes Dantzer (Century), 8-2
170-Eddie Merrill (North Carroll) dec Justin Peacock (Kent), 7-2
182-Jake Pooton (South Carroll) maj-dec Austin Rutkowski (Fallston), 9-1
195-Matt Olason (Queen Annes) maj-dec Bryce Scott (Smithsburg), 15-7
220-Brock Turnbaugh (Hereford) dec Eric Eckstein (Patterson Mill), 11-6
285-Brion Blades (North Caroline) pinned Alex Helm (Fallston), 1:42

Third Place Matches

- 106-Joey Thomas (South Carroll) dec Kyle McDonald (Oakdale), 1-0
113-Colin McDonald (Patterson Mill) dec Brandon Bekar (Owings Mills), 4-3
120-Cody Matthews (Mountain Ridge) dec Anthony Genco (Hereford), 3-1 OT
126-Jake Rendelman (Owings Mills) dec Justin Messersmith (Kent Island), 4-3
132-Jaiveion Turner (Cambridge-South Dorchester) dec Logan McKoy (Oakdale), 3-2 OT UTB
138-Bryan Davis (Williamsport) dec Kody Osselburn (Northern Garrett), 6-4 OT
145-Zach Smith (Kent Island) pinned Nelson Phillips (Rising Sun), 2:04
152-Connor Furst (Patuxent) dec Pat Guilday (Catoclin), 7-1
160-Tucker Ziegler (Middletown) pinned Tyler Maynard (Mountain Ridge), 1:54
170-Adam Fitzwater (Brunswick) dec Wade Slatniske (South Carroll), 3-2
182-Plevon Pryor (Dunbar) dec Dylan Juskus (Oakland Mills), 7-2
195-Austin Keadle (Williamsport) dec Austin Clark (Mountain Ridge), 5-1
220-Jake Utz (Winters Mill) dec Alfonzo Smith (Carver Vo-Tech), 6-5
285-Greg Smith (Randallstown) dec Robb Donovan (Kent), 13-8

Fifth Place Matches

- 106-Cody Trybus (Bohemia Manor) dec Brian Truppo (Poolesville), 7-0
113-Brennan Lincoln (Middletown) dec Kyle Trybus (Bohemia Manor), 4-2
120-Josh Grossnickle (Middletown) dec Timmy Taylor (Elkton), 1-0
126-Joe Juergens (Rising Sun) dec Jake Nikkila (Patterson Mill), 4-2
132-Anthony Solis (Hammond) dec David Hollingsworth (Owings Mills), 11-5
138-Jake Trybus (Bohemia Manor) dec Mitch Lake (Patuxent), 7-1
145-Garard White (Chesapeake-BC) dec Sinjin Shoop (Williamsport), 3-2 OT UTB
152-Logan Hull (Manchester Valley) pinned Wade Bishop (North Caroline), 1:34
160-Montana Walton (North Caroline) dec Will Barton (Rising Sun), 1:49
170-Austin Harrison (Western Tech) pinned Nolan Muganda (Easton), 1:25
182-Seth Wagner (Brunswick) dec Joe Miller (Hereford), 5-2
195-Chris Park (Marriotts Ridge) dec Zach Vincent (Oakland Mills), 6-1
220-Necho Freeman (Western Tech) dec Drew Wade (Easton), 3-1
285-Brady Scales (South Carroll) dec Joe Baker (Cambridge-South Dorchester), 3-1 OT