

ER wrestlers outlast No. 1 Fulton

Coach Quinn gains 300th career victory

By Gary Fallesen

Democrat and Chronicle

The East Rochester wrestlers referred to it as "six minutes of hell." After defeating Fulton, the state's top-ranked high school team, the Bombers felt as if they were in heaven.

Not only did fourth-ranked ER (6-0) outlast the two-time defending state sports writers poll champion, 23-20, it also ended Fulton's 52-meet winning streak and claimed for Coach Don Quinn career victory No. 300.

Quinn became the state's first 300-meet winner, and he did it before a standing-room-only crowd at ER estimated at 2,100. He is only the third coach nationally to win 300, according to the National

Federation of State High School Associations.

"I just hoped and prayed it would go down to the last bout," said Quinn, the only coach in ER wrestling history. "Not only because we had Chris Schojan, but because both kids were unbeaten and it would have been the perfect climax to an already great meet.

"This," Quinn added, "is super for high school wrestling."

The ending Quinn had envisioned turned into reality when Schojan defeated Fulton's Randy Cotton in the 215-pound match, 2-0, to break a 20-20 tie.

The victory by Schojan, a junior with an 18-0 record, resulted in the first loss for Fulton (11-1) since the 1980-81 season. It also extended ER's winning streak to 17 straight and avenged its last loss — at Fulton on Dec. 11, 1982.

"If you're going to lose you want to lose

to a team like that," Fulton Coach Wayne Bleau said. "They work for it. You don't want to lose to a team that's having one good year."

ER has had many good years since Quinn introduced the sport to the school in 1958. Included would be the 1978-79 season when the Bombers halted Olean's 55-meet winning streak.

"This has got to rank right up there with that one in Olean," said Quinn, "except that I think we had to wrestle better against Fulton than (against) Olean because we had one kid missing from the lineup, and some others in there who were banged up."

Tim Quinn, the coach's son and a winner at 138 pounds, said it was the biggest victory he's been involved with since he began wrestling at the varsity level in eighth grade.

"Beating Canandaigua last year was

big," he said, referring to the victory that catapulted ER to the No. 1 spot in the *Democrat and Chronicle's* final Section 5 coaches poll. "But this one was bigger. It was not only for No. 1 (in the state), but it was for the 300th.

"We got No. 300 against the best team in the state, and it wasn't our strongest lineup."

Fulton, which shares the No. 1 spot in the state poll with Huntington of Long Island, won five matches. ER won six, and one match ended in a draw.

A 16-3 superior decision by Tony Mar-coccia at 155, and a 13-5 major decision by Nick LaPietra at 167 brought ER from a 17-11 deficit to a 20-17 lead. After Fulton's Jeff Merritt decisioned Kevin Condon, 9-3, Schojan took the mat and the already vocal fans made more noise.

"I knew it was going to be kind of tough for us to win," said Bleau. "Schojan's a great wrestler."

Schojan, a state tournament runner-up last year at 177, said he felt ER "had it (the meet) won, until I went out there . . . that kid was tough."

But a second-period escape was all he needed as Cotton, a sophomore with a 17-1 record, tired late in the match.

"We did the best that we could," said Bleau. "They wrestled great. They're a little better balanced than us."

The meet was tied five times.

Fulton's Billy Jay earned a 4-2 decision over Sean Rucker at 98 pounds to give the Red Raiders an early 3-0 lead. Bill Herko of ER then defeated Jamie Bough at 105, 2-0, to tie the meet, 3-3.

A 16-10 decision by Chad Rucker gave ER a 6-3 lead after the 112-pound match, but Don LaBeef of Fulton edged Joe Taverite at 119 pounds, 4-3, to tie the score, 6-6.

The meet's score remained tied, 8-8, when ER's John Hanselman and Fulton's Chris Sorell wrestled to a 3-3 draw at 126.

Dave Burrige then gave Fulton an 11-8 lead with a 12-9 decision at 132, but Tim Quinn decided Dave Angeleri at 138 pounds, 8-6, to tie the score, 11-11.

A pin by Fulton's Chuck Atkinson at 145 pushed the Red Raiders in front, 17-11. But a superior decision by Marcoccia and a major decision by LaPietra put the Bombers on top, 20-17.

"I was very worried," said LaPietra, a senior with a 15-4 record, "is everybody going to wrestle up to par? Is everybody going to give it 'six minutes of hell'? But everybody wrestled their very best."

That was all Quinn had asked for in his pre-meet talk.

"I said, 'Go out and give the best battle you've ever had,'" said Quinn. "I told them, 'This is a war. Give it your all and be proud when you come off the mat.'"

"I told the seniors, 'This is the biggest crowd you'll ever wrestle in front of unless you go to the nationals in college.' And I told the underclassmen, 'You may never wrestle the No. 1 team in the state again, take advantage of it and have some fun.'"



Reed Hoffmann Democrat and Chronicle

Quinn and his team had many reasons to celebrate after Fulton fell.



Reed Hoffmann Democrat and Chronicle

Coach Don Quinn leading cheers as last seconds tick off in Chris Schojan's heavyweight victory that ended Fulton's 52-match winning streak.