

National Prep Wrestling: The Early Years

During the hiatus between the first and second National Prep tournaments, several PIAA districts, in addition to District One, started holding their own tournaments (Districts 2, 3, and 7 (WPIAL) in 1936).

There was also a 'western' state tournament, the Western Pennsylvania Interscholastic Wrestling Association tourney, that in its two years of existence (1936, 1937) included among its participants area powers including Canonsburg, Clearfield, DuBois, and Grove City, so there was no need for western PA schools to venture east to get quality competition.

Finally, Larry Sheridan, Sr. – founder of the National Prep Championships – was selected as the Assistant Head Coach for the 1936 U.S. Olympic Team, thus did not have the time to organize and host a national tournament.

In these years, whether Shamokin, Liberty, and the other northeastern PA schools did for the post-season competition is unclear. (New Jersey already had a state tourney then, which would have satisfied Newton's desire for post-season competition). Of course, once the PIAA began holding their own state tournament (1938) to qualify boys for that tourney, all the districts (except for D5, 1940) started holding tournaments of their own.

By 1937, Lehigh was only a private school tournament. the PIAA may have prohibited PIAA public schools from competing in the National Preps, as they had a very narrow attitude towards member schools competing in **any** medal tournament other than 'novice' (non-varsity/non-letter-earning and first-year high schoolers) tourneys until the late 1950s.

Third placers: In a customary practice at the time, the District Six tourney and others awarded third place to the semi-final loser of the eventual champion, and the other semi-final loser finished fourth. The first WPIWA and the first WPIAL tourney wrestled to a true second. Both may have been the case for the first National Prep.

Time Advantage: Back in the Olden Days (1930's), there was no point scoring system to determine the bout winners (the PIAA first instituted a scoring system starting in '40-41). Instead, they had an expanded version of "riding time," whereby if there was no fall during the bout (called a "throw" back then), winners were decided by how much more Time Advantage one had over their opponent as long it was above one minute.

If the riding time advantage was less than a minute, the referee either would 'decide' (the origin of the terms "referee's decision" or simply "decision") which wrestler was the victor based on the official's personal opinion of the bout. If he could not arrive at a decision (at least in medal competition), the boys would wrestle two two-minute overtime periods (for a total of eleven minutes of wrestling!) to decide the winner.

If still no fall occurred or not, and at least one-minute plus of Time Advantage had been accrued (it is uncertain whether riding time was held over from regulation), the ref would then decide who won. In a few situations, the referee declared both boys as winners or a winner was declared through a coin flip. Time Advantage to determine the winners in medal tourneys was dropped after the 1936-1937 season, at least in the PIAA.

Documented history of National Preps: Two of my chief research tools are the online subscription newspaper sites: Newspaperarchive.com and Newspapers.com. You can find details about the various National Prep tournaments, mainly in the Allentown Morning Call (maintained at Lehigh) and the Wilkes-Barre Times Leader and Sunday Independent (stored at Wyoming Seminary).

The Sunday Independent is not on either site but is available through 1958 at the PA Power Library: [PA Power Library](#). Milton Hershey, known initially as Hershey Industrial School, was an early participant until a law passed allowing private schools into the PIAA tournament starting in 1972-1973. Information on their participation might be found in the Lancaster or York area papers on [newspaper.com](#).

■ Jack Holt, www.PA-wrestling.com

1935 NATIONAL PREP PLACE-WINNERS (1st Championships; True 2nd)

TA = Time Advantage

In this first championship, it is unclear how they determined the 2nd-4th place-winners.

105	1 st – Larue Bodder, Bethlehem Liberty HS (PA) – F 5:05 cradle	2 nd – John Mikus, Shamokin (PA)	3 rd – Richard Plaster, Manheim (PA)	4 th – Tol, Newton NJ – OR – Visco, Freehold NJ
115	1 st – Robert Kemp, Shamokin HS (PA) – 4:49 time advantage (TA)	2 nd – Carlton Sprague, Newton (NJ)	3 rd – Richard Kapp, Mercersburg (PA)	4 th – Kortz, Freehold NJ
125	1 st – Herb Hunterton, Newton HS (NJ) – 6:57 TA	2 nd – Clarence Hershey, Manheim (PA)	3 rd – Frank Burgess, Shamokin (PA)	4 th – Foshay, Brooklyn NY – OR Gibbons, Teaneck NJ
135	1 st – Robert Stierli, Newton HS (NJ) – 1:11 TA, 2 extra periods	2 nd – George Harding, Brooklyn Poly (NY)	3 rd – Emanuel Ardolino, Mercersburg (PA)	4 th – Sahm, Manheim PA
145	1 st – James Kilgour, Franklin & Marshall (PA) – 6:28 TA	2 nd – Elwood Cassidy, Newton (NJ)	3 rd – Leroy Scott, Mercersburg (PA)	4 th – Harzula, Newton NJ
155	1 st – Ed Schultz, Newton HS (NJ) – 3:44 TA	2 nd – Robert Martin, Shamokin (PA)	3 rd – Phillip Bopp, Union (NJ)	4 th – Mott, Brooklyn Poly – OR – Visco, Freehold NJ
165	1 st – Melvin Paul, Shamokin HS (PA) – 1:04 TA, 2 extra periods	2 nd – Steve Hudi, Bethlehem (PA)	3 rd – Joseph Carter, Brooklyn Poly (NY)	4 th – Carter, Brooklyn Poly – OR McCormick, Frank & Marsh
175	1 st – Hjalmar Olson, Mercersburg (PA) – 2:55 TA	2 nd – A. Latson, Brooklyn Poly (NY)	3 rd – John Schultz, Newton (NJ)	4 th – Halikman, Asbury Park NY
HWT	1 st – Herbert Pickett, Gilman (MD) – 4:34 TA	2 nd – Frank Machinski, Brooklyn Poly	3 rd – Ralph Costa, Mercersburg (PA)	4 th – Schibanoff, Freehold NJ

Semi-Finals

- 105 lb. – Plasterer (Manheim) won vs. Tolman (Newton) 3:34 TA; Bodder (Bethlehem) won vs. Visco (Freehold) 5:07 TA
- 115 lb. – Kapp (Mercersburg) won vs. Kortz (Freehold) 4:40 TA; Kemp (Shamokin) won vs. Sprague (Newton) 3:30 (half-nelson & crotch hold)
- 125 lb. – Hershey (Manheim) won vs. Foshay (Brooklyn Poly) 1:49 TA; Hunterton (Newton) won vs. Gibbons (Teaneck NJ) 1:30 TA
- 135 lb. – Ardolino (Mercersburg) won vs. Sahm (Manheim) 3:36 TA; Stierli (Newton) won vs. Harding (Brooklyn)
- 145 lb. – Scott (Mercersburg) won vs. Harzula (Newton) 3:28 TA; Kilgour (Franklin & Marshall) won vs. Cassidy (Newton) 2:12 TA
- 155 lb. – Bopp (Union) won vs. Mott (Brooklyn Poly) ref decision; Schultz (Newton) won vs. Visco (Freehold) 2:40 TA
- 165 lb. – Paul (Shamokin) won vs. Carter (Brooklyn Poly) 2:50 TA; Hudi (Bethlehem) vs. McCormick (Franklin & Marshall) F 5:10 (body hold/chancery)

- 175 lb. – Olson (Mercersburg) won vs. Latson (Brooklyn Poly) F 3:03 (half & crotch); J. Schultz (Newton) won Halikman (Asbury Park) 2:47 TA
- HWT. – Pickett (Gilman) vs. Machinski (Brooklyn Poly) F 3:05 (front scissors); Costa (Mercersburg) vs. Schibanoff (Freehold) F 3:46 (bar/chancery)

Finals

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- 115 lb. – Robert Kemp, Shamokin HS (PA) won vs. Richard Kapp, Mercersburg (PA) – 4:49 time advantage (TA)
- 125 lb. – James Kilgour, Franklin & Marshall (PA) won vs. Clarence Hershey, Manheim (PA) – 6:28 TA
- 135 lb. – Robert Stierli, Newton HS (NJ) won vs. Emanuel Ardolino, Mercersburg (PA) – 1:11 TA, 2 extra periods
- 145 lb. – James Kilgour, Franklin & Marshall (PA) won vs. Leroy Scott, Mercersburg (PA) – 6:28 TA
- 155 lb. – Ed Schultz, Newton HS (NJ) won vs. Phillip Bopp, Union (NJ) – 3:44 TA
- 165 lb. – Melvin Paul, Shamokin HS (PA) won vs. Steve Hudi, Bethlehem Liberty (PA) – 1:04 TA, 2 extra periods
- 175 lb. – Hjalmar Olson, Mercersburg (PA) won vs. John Schultz, Newton (NJ) – 2:55 TA
- HWT. – Herbert Pickett, Gilman (MD) won vs. Ralph Costa, Mercersburg (PA) – 4:34 TA

Officials

- Ben Bishop, Roy I. Case, H.A. Scobey, Gus Gonzales (Lehigh), H. Rosenberg (Penn State)

Team Standings (Scoring: 1st Place – 5 points; 2nd Place – 3; 3rd Place – 1; Fall – 1 pt. extra/bout)

- (1) Newton High NJ – 27 points ... (2) Shamokin High PA – 23 ... (3) Brooklyn Poly NY – 19 ... (4) Mercersburg Academy PA – 16
 (5) Bethlehem Liberty PA – 10 ... (6) Franklin & Marshall MD – 8 ... (7) Manheim High – 7 ...
 (8) Asbury Park NJ – 3
 (9) Teaneck NY – 2 ... (10) Great Neck NY, Grove City PA, McBurney School NY, Plainfield NJ, Dickinson NJ – 0

1936 – NO CHAMPIONSHIPS HELD