

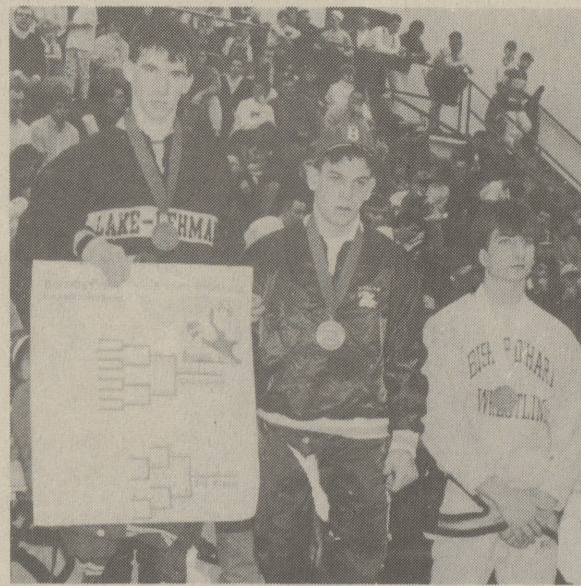
Back Mountain wrestling champions



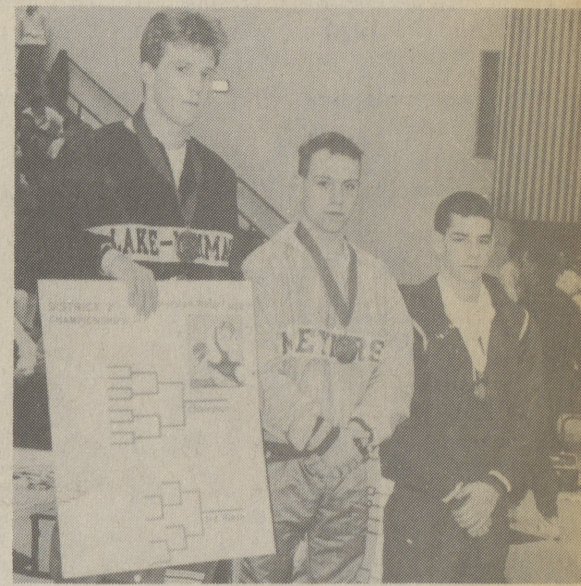
Rick Finnegan
103 lb. champion



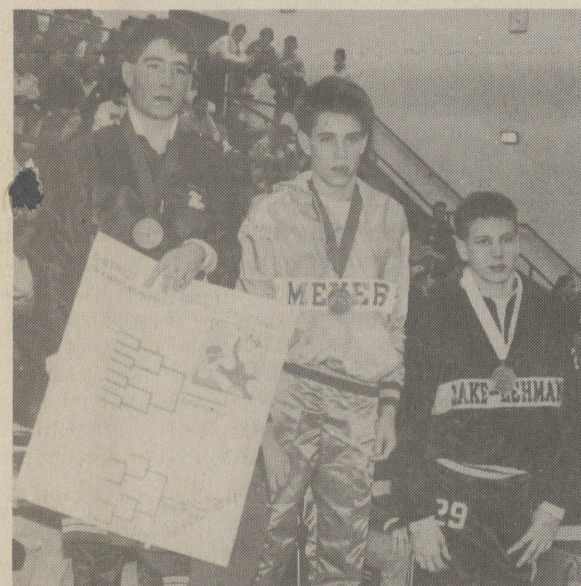
Mike Stuart
112 lb. champion



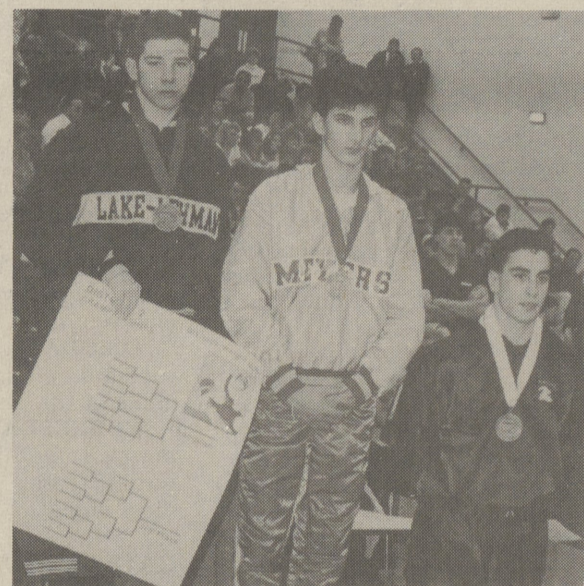
Jason McDade
125 lb. champion



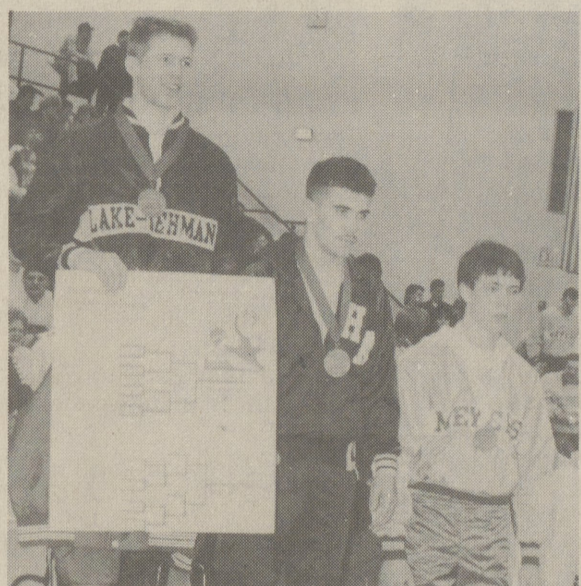
Charlie Roper
130 lb. champion



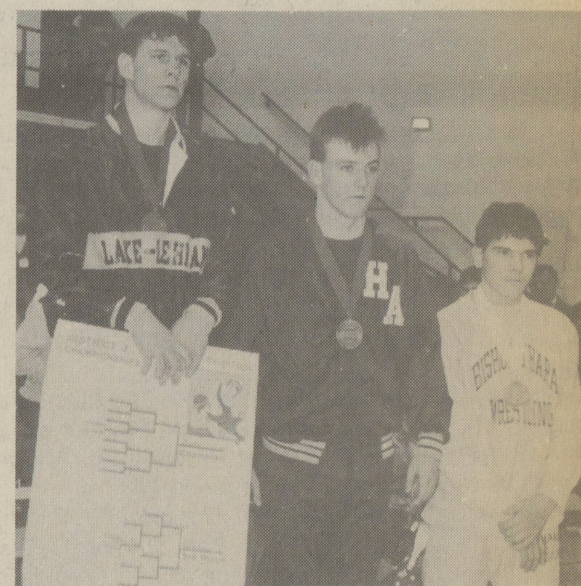
Frank Natitus
135 lb. champion



Charlie Jacoby
140 lb. champion



Justin Goodwin
145 lb. champion



Mike Geurin
171 lb. champion

Photos by Dave Kozemchak

14 wrestlers advance to regionals

By FLORENCE FINN
Sports Correspondent

The Back Mountain brought home eight champions from the District 2 Class AA wrestling tournament held at King's College, Feb. 28 and 29. In addition, Lake-Lehman co-coaches Phil Lipski and Tom Williams were chosen coaches of the year and Lake-Lehman's Michael Geurin was named outstanding wrestler in the tournament.

Prior to the competition, Coach Lipski felt confident, but not unrealistic going into districts. He welcomed the tactical challenges involved in post-season competition. "A wrestler gets more points for pins and major decisions than in dual meets and there is the overtime factor since there are no ties," he explained. His game plan must have worked, because his team accumulated 208 points, well ahead of the second place team Hanover with 166.5.

To advance to regional competition, a wrestler must place first, second, or third in districts. There-

fore, the Back Mountain will advance 14 wrestlers to Williamsport High School on March 6 and 7 to compete in the PIAA regional tournament. Eleven of these wrestlers will be from Lake-Lehman while Dallas will send three.

The winning began in the finals for Lehman in the first weight class (103) when junior Rick Finnegan, with a 19-6-2 record, won a close match 4-3 over Bishop O'Hara's Eric Murphy. In order to win, Finnegan let Murphy up in the third period and took him down with 10 seconds to go. "I was worried until it was over," commented an elated Finnegan.

Lake-Lehman put freshman Mike Stuart out next against sophomore Dan Fey from Meyers. The young 112 pounder had no trouble winning 8-3. "It feels real good to win as a freshman. I almost didn't make weight. I was over 1 1/2 lb. Friday and a 1/2 pound on Saturday. I rode a bike to lose the weight," a youthful Stuart reminisced.

At 125, the local fans were torn between two Back Mountain grapplers, Lehman's Jason McDade and Dallas' Bob Jesse. Jesse had defeated McDade 8-3 at Lehman and it seemed as though he might repeat in the first period when he led 4-0, but a persistent McDade wouldn't give up and kept chipping away, beginning with a neutral and a tight ride on Jesse the whole second period. In their third period, McDade added a neutral making the score 4-2. Then another point was awarded McDade for an illegal move. With 10 seconds to go, he took Jesse down to win 5-4. Jesse will also advance.

At 130, Lehman's Charlie Roper decided Meyers Mike Williams 13-6. Charlie was confident going into the match that would enable him to repeat as district champ. "My main competition was from AAA. Also, in districts there is not the pressure to win. You just have to win and you know exactly which weight you'll be in. I just have to win," he commented. "I was nervous though, when he put me on my back," Roper confessed.

At 135, Mountaineer Frank Natitus won a 3-0 decision over Meyers' Jason Kishbaugh. It was scoreless through two periods and, with 26 seconds to go in the third period, Natitus received one point for locked hands of Kishbaugh. Then Natitus got a reversal for two more and won the match.

The district medal was more of an accomplishment than most were aware of. Frank had sprained



Coaches of the Year

Tom Williams, left, and Phil Lipski, center, were named Coaches of the Year at the District 2 wrestling tournament last weekend. Their Lake-Lehman squad took seven titles and will send 11 wrestlers to regionals. (Photo by Dave Kozemchak)

his ankle on Wednesday, couldn't put weight on it Thursday or Friday and was seeing a doctor. As luck would have it, he also had to wrestle an extra match on that swollen ankle.

"I wasn't sure how bad it would hurt, but I figured I'd make it," a delighted Natitus explained. "It hurt Friday. The match had to be stopped once. Tonight it felt okay." As he wore his medal, it was obvious that he felt no pain at that moment.

Lehman's Charlie Jacoby, with a record of 27-0-1, made it his 28th win at 140 as he put on a take-down clinic resulting in a technical fall over Meyers Tony Monico. "This is only the first step to the state championship," Jacoby stated, sounding like a man with a mission. This was the second district medal for him.

Lake-Lehman continued its climb to the team championship when senior Justin Goodwin decided Mike Ropietski of Hanover 2-1. In this tight battle, Justin recalled thinking of how his brother P.J. had lost a district championship in the final seven seconds two years before. "I thought about the work, the camps, and my brother. I wasn't about to let all that work go for 25 seconds, so I held on," Justin related. He had spent 32 days at wrestling camps to repeat his district championship.

Finally, the master stepped onto the mat and quickly took down Russ Davis of Hanover. Then he repeated that feat endlessly to accomplish a technical fall in 4:48. Mike Geurin, with a 28-0 record, repeatedly control his opponent, but the modest 171 lb. senior just did his part. "So it was good for the team and myself," mumbled Geurin.

But the sweaty, smiling spokesman panted as he sternly spoke after his win. "This is the easiest goal of many goals." The two-time district champ will settle for nothing less than a state medal.

The remaining regional qualifiers are Tim Sayre (119) and John Wood (135) both freshmen; Ed Pitcavage (189) a sophomore and freshman Brian Gizowski (Hwt.) all of Lake-Lehman.

Bob Jesse, runnerup at 125, will also advance along with Dallas teammate Glen Ellsworth (140). Other than Jesse's second place status, they will advance as a result of third place finishes. A happy Ellsworth reached a preseason goal. "My goal was to take a third place in districts so I could advance to regionals. I'm excited about the finish," he confided.

So the practicing, training, and dieting will continue for at least one more week for 14 local boys and the entire Back Mountain will be pulling for them.

Naugle out with injury

By FLORENCE FINN
Sports Correspondent

If you attended the PIAA District II wrestling tournament over the past weekend at King's College, you had to have noticed the absence of Jason Naugle from the Lake-Lehman lineup. Jason wrestled most of the season at 160 or any weight close to it. Wherever Coach Lipski needed Jason, he did the job to get a pin or a win for the successful Knights' team.

However, in his last match against Wyoming Valley West, in a win that contributed immensely to the team victory by two points to maintain its undefeated status, Jason appeared to be injured. What the fans didn't know is that his injury was due to a chronic back condition which developed as far back as ninth grade.

"I had pain in my freshman year but not severe. It comes and goes. I'm not always in pain and it's not always caused by wrestling. Sometimes I just twist the wrong way," Jason explained.

At any rate, Jason's parents took him to Dupont Children's Hospital in Maryland after his ninth grade season. He was examined and given the okay to continue in sports. He returned to his sophomore and junior years with no signs of any back disorder which had been previously diagnosed as a herniated disc.

The summer after his junior year, Jason was water skiing and once again he began to have problems with his back. "I'm not sure," he continued, "but it may have triggered problems again." When he returned to school in September of 1991, Jason was experiencing pain sporadically, but there were no physical restrictions placed on him.

Before wrestling season, however, he had an MRI and was advised but not forbidden to refrain from wrestling. Given that choice, Jason and his parents made the decision to wrestle his senior year. He was experiencing no major difficulty and was on his way to an undefeated season until the Wyoming Valley West meet. Lehman needed a win and Jason was winning going into the final period, but it

was a close one. The match had to be stopped because Jason's back was feeling the stress, but he wrestled on and won.

A doctor, who was present at the meet, later examined Jason and required a neurosurgeon's permission to resume wrestling. "No doctor would release me to go back, even though I feel that my back is no worse than it has been," lamented Naugle.

Although parents and coaches aren't happy about denying Jason his chance at being a state champ, there are more critical issues to consider. "A back injury is serious," Coach Phil Lipski reflected. "It's a difficult decision that Jason's doctors and Jason have to make. We want him, but our main concern is his health."

Appearing dejected, Jason reflected on his successful season. "I'm disappointed. I had hoped to qualify for states, but I feel better knowing the team had a good year and I helped a little."

Jason helped more than a little. "Jason's being out of the lineup will mean a 25 point swing for our opponents toward the team title," stated Lipski. It turned out Lehman didn't need the 25 points to garner the title, but Jason was missed by his teammates.

"We wrestled together since second grade," Charlie Roper commented, "and now his (Naugle's) senior year he can't go to districts."

Many fellow wrestlers thought that Jason had the makings of a state champ. "It's a shame! He's so good! He definitely would have made it to states. He's strong, quick, a good wrestler," praised Justin Goodwin. Mike Geurin agreed.

"Yeah, it's a shame that he can't wrestle. He's wrestled since second grade and as a senior he can't go on, especially since he would probably have made it to states," Geurin said.

You can bet that many Lehman wrestlers will be showing their gratitude to Naugle for a gutsy season in which he helped their team to attain a flawless record. Each one may have a little more incentive as they wrestle in regionals and states.



Outstanding
Mike Geurin of Lake-Lehman was named outstanding wrestler during the District 2 tournament last weekend.