

Del Norte's McCovey wins seconds state wrestling title

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After placing his name prominently in the Humboldt-Del Norte Conference record books by becoming the first athlete to win a state wrestling championship a season ago, you would think there would be very little for Del Norte's Roger McCovey to prove in this his senior season.

You would be wrong.

The Warrior senior followed up his unbeaten run to the state title last season, with a remarkable second consecutive unblemished season, capturing his second straight state title in the heavyweight division at Rabobank Arena in Bakersfield on Saturday.

McCovey pinned unseeded Angel Posadas of Bakersfield's Foothill High school at the 5:05 mark in the championship match, his fourth victory via pin in five matches over a two-day span, to walk away with the title. He fell behind 2-1 for about a minute -- the longest stretch all season that he's trailed -- but he quickly adjusted and went in for the kill.

"I made a mistake, but I knew I had to come back and I came back pretty hard," McCovey said. "I tried to bar him at the end of the second round, but time ran out. In the third round I went all out for it, and got it."

McKinleyville freshman Tyrin Stevenson was also at

the CIF State tournament on Saturday. He lost Turlock's Brendan Eagleston of in the eighth-place match.

While McCovey was cruising through his section of the bracket, Posadas, who came into the tournament unseeded, made a name for himself in a big way in the semifinals.

Posadas defeated Buchanan High's Kyle Papendorf, the No. 2 seed, 3-1 in a grueling triple-overtime epic.

"(Posadas) had beaten a ton of folks to get to the finals," Schaad said. "He would be the favorite at any other tournament. He's big, he's strong and he's athletic. He knows how to wrestle, and if he gets ahold of somebody or if an opponent gets in the wrong position against him, Posadas can put the kid on his back."

That analysis proved to be true in a big way early, as Posadas registered the first takedown of the match, the first grappler to put McCovey in such a predicament all year, and took a 2-1 lead into the second round. However, McCovey managed to regroup quickly, scoring two takedowns and taking advantage of a stalling call on Posadas in round two to take a 6-3 lead into the final round before pinning the Bakersfield native just under a minute into the final round.

It appeared the road to the state title would be a smooth one early on, as McCovey pinned his first three opponents in a combined 4:16, including a 53-second demolition of Elk Grove's Lefi Lotuligasenda in his third round match.

"The experience Roger had last year at this tournament helped him, but he has also improved from where he was last year," Del Norte assistant coach Clint Schaad said. "He's a year older which

has made him more confident. The quality of competition is just as tough as it was last year, but Roger is just that much stronger and faster.”

That strength showed early and often in his first three victories, as McCovey looked poised to accomplish the goal of “pinning everyone at the state tournament” that he set for himself after winning the state championship as a junior.

However, in his semifinal match against Josh Lee of Martin Luther King High School, McCovey merely came away with a 4-0 victory in a match that went the full three rounds.

”He was disappointed that he didn't pin that kid (Lee), because he wanted to pin everyone,” Schaad said. “I told him 'Smile, you're in the California state finals match again.'”

As if being a two-time state champion isn't impressive enough, with the victory over Posadas the Warrior has not lost an in season match since December 2006, his sophomore season. It's a streak that extends well over 100 matches and defies logic.

However, it is a 3-2 loss to two-time national champion Ken Altarac of New York, that continues to motivate McCovey as he looks to avenge that defeat in two weeks at the national tournament.

”I'm pretty confident I'll beat him this year,” McCovey said. “I don't think he's working as hard. He got beat a couple times, and last year he went undefeated.”

Schaad is well-aware of McCovey's desire to be the best.

”Roger is pushing himself more this year than he did last year,” Schaad said. “Winning that national title is the only thing that has eluded him in his high

school career. He still has that one goal he has yet to achieve.”

LOCAL WRESTLERS FARED:

103 pounds

Friday

Kevin Mai (North Torrance) def. Ty Stevenson (Arcata) 9-0

Ty Stevenson (Arcata) def. Eddie Estevez (Otay Ranch) 8-5

Ty Stevenson (Arcata) def. Michael Nolasco (El Modena) 5-1

Ty Stevenson (Arcata) def. Kioni Villalobos (Sante Fe) 11-3

Saturday

Brandon Egleston (Turlock) def. Ty Stevenson (Arcata) 5-0

125 pounds

Friday

Cody Tow (Union Mine) def. Ivan Cardoza (Fortuna) 17-2

Ivan Cardoza (Fortuna) def. Jimmy Zhen (Galileo) 11-5

Mike Le (San Fernando) def. Ivan Cardoza (Fortuna) 15-2

145 pounds

Friday

Aaron Pickard (Casa Roble) def. Joey Kravitz (Del Norte) Fall 3:17

Duncan Tormey (Los Altos) def. Joey Kravitz (Del Norte) 9-4

152 pounds

Friday

Jasper Loren (Saratoga) def. Jake Cruz (Eureka) Fall 0:24

Jared Stine (Willows) def. Jake Cruz (Eureka) Fall 2:41

285 pounds

Friday

Roger McCovey (Del Norte) def. Byron Mancia (Sunnyside) Fall 1:48

Roger McCovey (Del Norte) def. Lefi Letuligasrnda (Elk Grove) Fall 0:53

Roger McCovey (Del Norte) def. Kavon Tillotson (Oak Ridge) Fall 0:53

Saturday

Semifinals

Roger McCovey (Del Norte) def. Josh Lee (Martin Luther King) Fall 1:35

Championship

Roger McCovey (Del Norte) def. Angel Posadas (Foothill) Fall 5:05