

## **JAG Physical Therapy Brings International Wrestling to West Orange High School**

JAG Physical Therapy, thanks to the efforts of founder John Gallucci, brought the very best of international wrestling competition to New Jersey last month.

With exciting victories at super heavyweight in both styles, the New York Athletic Club won a pair of international dual meets in sold-out South Gymnasium at West Orange High School.

"It was an unbelievable night," explained Gallucci, who works as a trainer and medical consultant for the New York Athletic Club and scheduled the event in West Orange. "There were some of the best athletes in the world present and the fans were able to see some great matches."

The NYAC defeated Russia, 14-11 in freestyle, and the NYAC also defeated Romania in Greco-Roman, 14-12. Over 1,600 fans packed the gymnasium to root the American teams to victory.

The freestyle match finished first. After six bouts, the meet was tied at 11-11 going into the final bout. Hometown hero Steve Mocco, who grew up in nearby North Bergen, N.J., stopped Soslan Gagloev of Russia, 1-0, 2-0. Mocco (Colorado Springs, Colo./New York AC) scored a takedown in the first period and two takedowns in the second period to win the match, as the crowd erupted with applause. Mocco won four prep national titles during his high school years, competing for St. Benedict's Prep and Blair Academy.

In the Greco-Roman dual meet, the U.S. trailed 12-11 going into the final bout. 2002 World champion Dremiel Byers (Colorado Springs, Colo./U.S. Army) scored an impressive 6-0, 3-0 win over Yannick Szczepaniak of France.

Szczepaniak competed because the Romanian team did not have a heavyweight. The bout was a rematch of the bronze-medal match at the 2007 World Championships, where Byers defeated Szczepaniak, a victory which gave the United States enough points to win the World Team title.

There were 14 matches during the evening, and each of the individual winners received \$1,000 for their victory. The freestyle dual meet featured four local heroes, three from New Jersey and one from nearby Long Island, N.Y., and three of them won their bouts.

After losing the first two freestyle matches, the NYAC came back with a victory at 66 kg/145.5 lbs., when Jesse Jantzen (Cambridge, Mass./New York AC) stopped Junior World champion Shamil Batirov, 4-0, 4-1.

Along with Mocco, another New Jersey native, 2006 World bronze medalist Donny Pritzlaff (Madison, Wis./New York AC) won his bout at 74 kg/163 lbs., defeating young Russian Rashid Kurbanov, 1-0, 1-0. Pritzlaff scored a takedown in each period for the win. He was a three-time New Jersey state champion for Lyndhurst High School.

The New Jersey native who lost his bout in freestyle was Damion Hahn (Ithaca, N.Y./New York AC), who fell to Soslan Gagloev 1-0, 0-3, 1-0. The match went to the clinch in the third period, and Gagloev secured the leg hold and scored the takedown. Hahn was a three-time New Jersey state champion from

Lakewood High School.

A key win for the freestyle team came at 84 kg/185 lbs., when Andy Hrovat (Ann Arbor, Mich./New York AC) defeated Alexander Kusraev of Russia, 1-2, 5-1, 2-2. Hrovat was trailing 2-0 with time running out in the final period, when he secured a front headlock and turned Kusraev for two points just prior to the buzzer for the winning move.

The New York AC Greco-Roman team got off to a slow start, losing its first three matches. However, the team got on a roll, winning the final four matches in a row for the victory. The team featured five of the seven members of the 2007 U.S. Greco-Roman World team, including the four athletes who won bouts this evening.

Getting the USA jump started with a victory at 74 kg/163 lbs. was T.C. Dantzler (Colorado Springs, Colo./Gator WC), who defeated Ion Painiat of Romania, 5-1, 4-0.

The U.S. comeback continued when 2007 World silver medalist Brad Vering (Colorado Springs, Colo./New York AC) defeated Robert Papp of Romania, 5-4, 7-0. After a very competitive first period, Vering opened up the offense in the second period, securing a technical fall to end the bout.

The third straight win came at 96 kg/211.5 lbs. when 2005 World bronze medalist Justin Ruiz (Colorado Springs, Colo./New York AC) shut down Catalin Surugiu of Romania, 6-0, 3-0. Ruiz dominated the entire bout.

The Greco-Roman triumph was sealed with Byers victory, the last match of the evening, sending the crowd home happy.