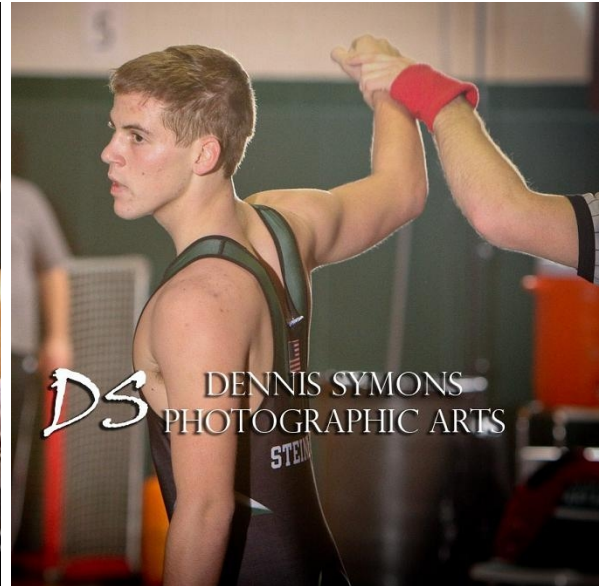
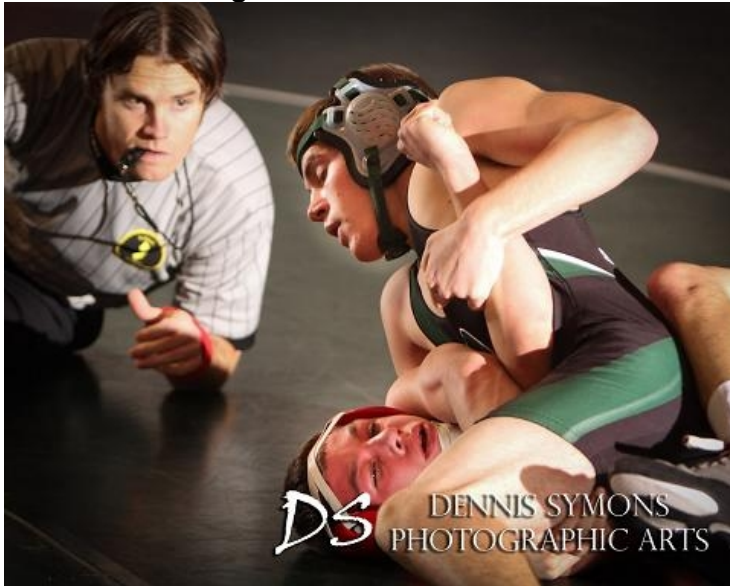


Dec. 21 Wrestling



With the referee getting in position to slam the hand, Steinert's Brandon Bernstein puts the finishing touches on his first-period pin against Manalapan's Steve Chandler in tonight's 152-pound bout. Bernstein then has his hand raised in victory (Photo by Dennis Symons Jr./purchase photos at www.dennisymons.com).

After a year of health issues, Bernstein looks toward a big senior season

By Rich Fisher

Fish4Scores.com

Dec. 21: After finishing fourth in districts as a sophomore, Brandon Bernstein was poised for a big junior season.

His body, however, had other plans.

Bernstein finished a respectable 9-4 last year, but missed the Mercer County Tournament due to surgery on his cauliflower ear, then missed the District 25 Tournament because of a shoulder injury.

The Steinert High 152-pounder hopes to make up for it this year and got off to a good start in dual meet action by recording the Spartans only pin tonight in a 36-21 loss to visiting Manalapan.

"Last year was disappointing," said Bernstein, who pinned Manalapan's Steve Chandler in 1:41. "I actually cut down this year from 160. I thought 152 would be a better weight for me. I'm looking to get out of districts and hopefully do big things for my team.

"I have more confidence now as an upperclassmen. I think I could have gone further last year than I did as a sophomore. Obviously, I'm hoping this year will be my year to make up for it."

Steinert coach Adam Jankos feels that with his shoulder intact, Bernstein could be a force.

"His shoulder kept popping out last year," the coach said. "I'm looking for a banner year from him this year.

"When you're wrestling with him and you get in a scramble with him he always knows where to put his hips. His hips are always on top and if you're gonna do a roll you better roll hard cuz he's gonna catch you on your back."

Which is exactly what happened to Chandler tonight.

"I was just keeping good hips," he said. "I just kind of hipped over, caught him on his back and knew that I had to finish it to get the points for my team since we were down at the time."

Unfortunately for the Spartans, no one else could duplicate Bernstein's effort as their five other wins were all by decision. Manalapan had a 13-3 advantage in bonus points with four pins and a major.

The Spartans were still in it, however, when decisions by Matt and Sean McDonald at 160 and 170 pulled Steinert within 23-18. But at 182, the Braves Geoff Kelman reversed River Ullrich with 10 seconds left to pull out a 2-1 victory.

After a John Bussi win for Steinert at 195, Chris Terraghi clinched the win with a major at 220 (the match started at 106).

“I was pleased with some people,” said Jankos, who also got decisions from Tyler Beers and Joe Michel. “But some guys I thought were in shape kind of ran out of gas in the third period. It’s the beginning of the season so we’re still getting used to wrestling six minutes.

“We’ve been pushing it in practice, running three miles a day and doing a lot of drilling. So if we keep that up and we keep wrestling some matches, we’ll really get that gas in the third period.”