



SPORTS

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

FRIDAY MARCH 10, 2000

Spartans pin down gold at OFSAA

By **STEVE LeBLANC***The Champion*

Mission accomplished!

E.C. Drury spent more than a decade-and-a-half scaling the ranks of provincial high school wrestling — then over one glorious and emotionally exhausting weekend planted their flag at the top of the mountain.

In Woodstock Saturday, Larry Jaroslowski and his band of grapplers realized the ultimate dream of capturing the team title at OFSAA.

Knocking on the door with silver medals the previous two years, the perennial powerhouse squad finally dethroned defending champion Brampton Centennial 134-120.

Drury's wrestling guru recognized as early as the fall that winning the crowning jewel was within reach, but it wasn't until after the second last match of the tournament that he was convinced his team had prevailed.

"A tremendous amount of work went into this season. This (championship) is the culmination of every effort put in since the program began," remarked a still mentally drained Jaroslowski Monday. "The great thing is so many guys contributed to this, that's what makes it really special. From top to bottom, everybody played a part in this victory."

Leading the charge with individual gold medal efforts were rookie Mike Devries and senior Chad Merritt — who became only the second and third local wrestlers to win OFSAA. Colin Widdis was the first to do so, back in 1994.

A pint-size mascot for the team when his father was an assistant coach through the mid-80s, Merritt earned the distinction of closing things out for Drury.

The 64-kilogram combatant — who'd steadily elevated both his individual performance and leadership skills over the final few weeks heading into provincials — led from start to finish in the title match.

Facing Bishop Ryan's Dennis Sousa in a rematch of the district championships, he earned a decisive 12-6 triumph that left no room for doubt as to which school would grab gold.

Said Merritt, "It was amazing, the best feeling in the world. When I looked into the crowd after my arm was raised, it felt like everyone was right there with me."

For Devries (41 kg.), winning the provincials was just as memorable — and certainly more surprising. Squaring off with seasoned veteran Clayton Sereires, River High's silver medalist last year, he fell behind early on a couple of throws but then turned the tables with an authoritative toss of his own and a follow-up pin about a minute-and-a-half into the bout.

The Spartans' other medalist for the weekend was fellow senior John McCart (95 kg.)

While upset en route to gold, due in part to a rip injury, the towering co-captain quickly discarded disappointment in favour of an impressive showing during the bronze medal match.

He won in convincing fashion to take his first OFSAA medal.

"I just sucked it up and concentrated on team gold," said McCart, one of a handful of Drury wrestlers who reached the finals and one of 15 who earned points in the team title victory. "But that's the way it's always been here. We always support each other and work as a team."

Even Kevin Heffron — Drury's most accomplished grappler over the past two years, who surprisingly failed to place at last weekend's provincials — couldn't help but focus on how the team triumphed, rather than his personal shortcomings.

He said, "The best thing was seeing two of my best friends win medals. During Chad's match, I must have jumped out of my seat five times. It was non-stop excitement all weekend. It was just great."

Added fellow team leader Tom Gallinger, "This is the greatest feeling I've ever experienced. It was amazing."

Also reaching the finals, Rob Petherick placed fifth and Sean Burnham took sixth spot. Chris Holmes, Rory McDonell, Will Van Duyn and Mark Wilson all cracked the top 12. Making up the rest of the championship crew were Nick Barkley, Nick Baron, Graham Carroll, Jason Landry, Andy Wadeson and assistant coach Simon Vanellis.

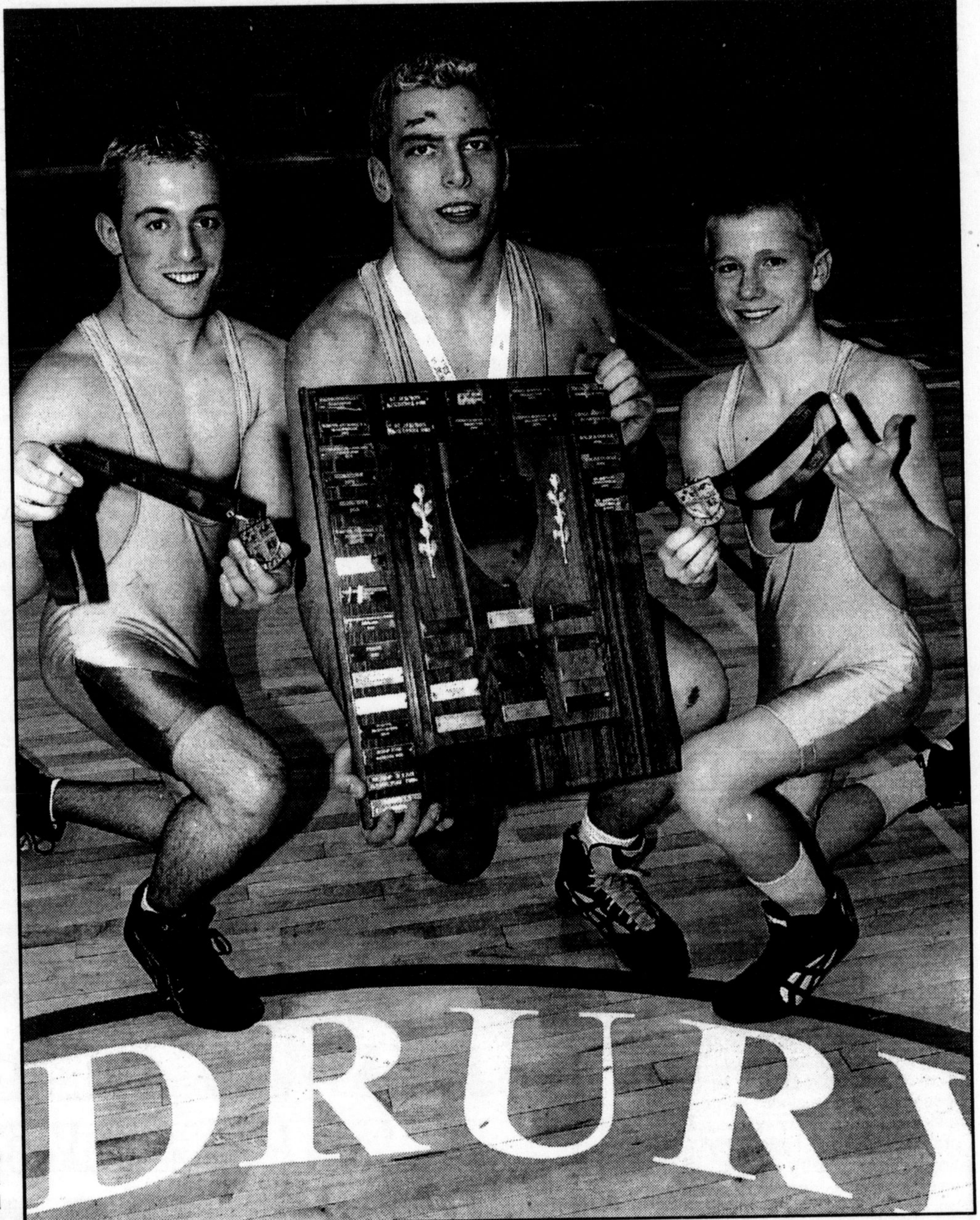


Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Spartan wrestlers (from left) Chad Merritt, John McCart and Mike Devries led their school to the team title at OFSAA last weekend in Woodstock. Here, Merritt and Devries display their gold medals while McCart — who secured bronze — holds the team championship plaque.




We're brand new!

Tours Welcome:
Come and have a personal tour of our beautiful new facility. Check out just where your pet stays before you board.



REDWOOD
PET RESORT

- Spacious bedrooms with adjoining patios
- Playground and pool facilities
- Select luxury suites available
- Check out our Pamper and Spoil Me Silly Programs!



Office Hours

Monday - Thursday	8 am - 6 pm
Fridays	8 am - 8 pm
Saturdays	8 am - 4 pm
Sundays	12 pm - 8 pm

Boarding • Grooming • Obedience Training • 7594 Auburn Rd., Milton **905-878-9410**