

Pushing a Teammate

By Dave Conifer

When I couldn't jump anymore I found Nick in the first place I looked, jumping up and down next to the rolled up wrestling mats in the tunnel we had come to call home.

"Hey Nick," I said. He nodded at me, but didn't say anything. I understood perfectly. Right now, he was all about his match. To distract him before he invited it would violate an unwritten code. I pulled my rope out and did a few hundred more jumps to keep my sweat going.

When the 145-pound semifinals start-

ed, Nick asked me to come over to the warm-up mats with him to roll around. He seemed sharp, as he practiced single and double-leg attacks on me. Next, he tied up and worked through a front-headlock series that I really didn't know anything about, except that it didn't feel real comfortable as he was doing it to me. When he paused to stretch his hamstrings I felt like it was safe to talk. "Do you know much about this guy?" I asked simply. He was facing Bill Grimm, from Yardville High School. Grimm was being hyped at the time as being Mercer's best chance in the

near future for Mercer County's first state champion. Mercer, which included the state capital, Trenton, was the only county in New Jersey that had never had a champion.

"He beat me over the summer," Nick said. "It was at camp at Blair," he explained. "It was 1-0. I came close to taking him down a few times but couldn't finish," he said.

"Your shots look sharp," I said encouragingly.

"Thanks," he said. "That's what I had trouble with against him over the summer,