

Ramapo streak comes to end

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FRANKLIN LAKES -- Daniel Tobin sat on the edge of his seat and prayed.

"Let us win, please let us win," the Ramapo freshman repeated.

The Green Raiders trailed by two wins going into the deciding epee bout and Michael Krouse held a 2-1 lead over Columbia's Matt Hefley.

But divine intervention wasn't enough for Ramapo on Wednesday.

Hefley battled back and tied the bout at 4 before going on to win, 5-4, as fifth-seeded Columbia stunned No. 1 Ramapo, 14-13, in the semifinals of the boys State fencing tournament.

The loss -- Ramapo's first of the season -- snapped the Green Raiders' 12-match winning streak.

"This is kind of hard to accept," Tobin said. "You have an undefeated season and then you lose one. It's just a big shock."

The Green Raiders had dominated their league opponents all season, but against a much-tougher Columbia team they looked timid and out of sync. After the first round, Ramapo had only one win in each weapon.

After falling behind, 6-3, Ramapo tied the match at 9 behind senior captain Matt Ahn and its saber squad. Ahn made quick work of Columbia's foil squad -- winning his three bouts, 5-2, 5-2 and 5-3 -- and Adrian Bak, David Winer and Jin Woo Youm swept the second saber round.

"We gave our best," said Youm, a senior captain. "It's a shock, but Columbia's a good team. We wanted to go all the way, but it just didn't happen."

Ramapo's saber and foil squads finished 5-4 and the epee team was 3-6.

"I've spent three years on the varsity team and part of me is saying it's been a good year, it's been tough and now that it's over I can rest," said Ahn. "But it's bittersweet because it's over and I can't do what I love to do -- fence."

"Today was the most fun I've had," Ahn added. "In all of our meets we had pretty good leads throughout, but today we had an opponent that was real good. And every bout counted."

Columbia faces Voorhees or Millburn in the final March 8. Ramapo will play in the consolation match the same day.