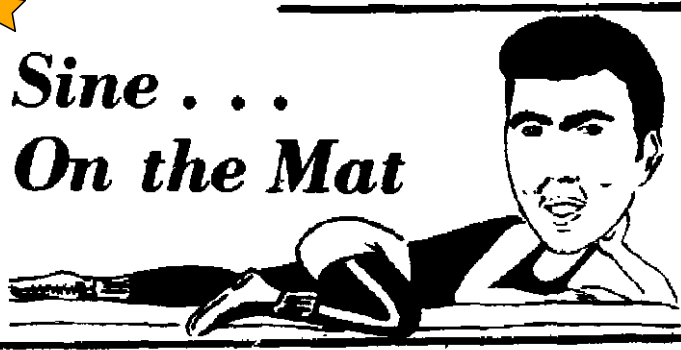




Sine . . . On the Mat



From Bottom to Top

Eisenhower High School has just finished its most successful wrestling in the three years of the sport at that school.

In each of the first two seasons, the Knights could only manage a lone win, while losing nine. This year, tables were turned and the team went 9-2 and captured the Southern Tier Wrestling Conference crown.

Credit must be given to the team, who took its wrestling seriously. Also, Coach Don Johns and his assistant, Troy Martin, who instilled a spirit of confidence and camaraderie that could not be dislodged.

It was a proud Knight team that journeyed to Franklin Friday and Saturday for the Section IV tournament. Accompanied Friday by a busload of student fans and many parents and friends, the Southern Tier champs staked their honor with the Pennsylvania schools.

The Southern Tier league is made up of 11 teams—10 of which are located in New York.

Eisenhower battled, but could only place three grapplers in the semi-finals Saturday. Many of the Knights, who had amassed fine individual records, fell easy prey to the seemingly more adept competition. A feeling of awe fell across the Eisenhower fans, who had seen their team conquer nine of 11 teams to cross the Knight path.

Eisenhower finished with a ninth-place position in the tournament, individually placing Pete Block second at 95 and Danny Larson (138) and Owen Williams (103) fourth.

Meanwhile, to the north, New York State sectionals were being contested. Using comparative records as a guide—the way most tournament seedings are decided—Eisenhower would have had two wrestlers seeded first in the Class A sectionals. Eisenhower is a 'B' school.

Further, in the 'B-C' sectionals, the Knight squad would probably have placed no worse than second—considering how teams that had beaten finished.

Five of the Southern Tier wrestlers who won in the sectionals there were either beaten or tied by Knight grapplers. But, no Southern Tier team placed more than three individual champions.

One Southern Tier coach laments the calibre of wrestling there by calling it a "second class sport." The reason for this can be explained by noting the calibre and style of wrestling as well as fan support. Even last year Eisenhower had top crowds in the conference. This year, well . . .

Comparison between the two systems may be made.

The difference is staggering! A few miles distant, and crossing a state line, means the difference between the top and the bottom in a tournament.

One fact helps show the difference. In Eisenhower's final three matches of the year—against Falconer, Pine Valley and Silver Creek—only three opponents tried a leg takedown against a Knight. Only one succeeded. The northerners choose, rather to "muscle" their opponents and rely on strength rather than finesse.

Warren High Coach Mike Weber said recently that the double leg takedown is the first takedown move he teaches a new wrestler. And, he added, he believes that all other coaches in this section would agree.

Eisenhower Coach Johns has taught the Knights such maneuvers, for that is the manner in which they gain most of their takedowns.

Although this argument may appear too technical, it does show that the Knights are spending their dual-meet season in a league specializing in "muscling" and the tournament season in a league specializing in wrestling knowledge.

Take a look at college wrestling and note the number of wrestlers who just use strength. Leave the glove on your left hand, the five fingers on your right one may be enough to get an accurate total.

If the difference is there, and Eisenhower is essentially being cheated, then what can be done?

A simple solution is to leave the Southern Tier and wrestle the regular season in Pennsylvania. This would require a little more travel time. A help, however, will be the addition of wrestling to Youngsville's athletic program. All wrestling need not be done with 'B' teams. Corry has expressed a desire to wrestle with Eisenhower next season. Titusville may also be added to the schedule.

If the Knights, as well as any other 'B' team, must go against the 'A' teams in tournaments, then they should be permitted to wrestle them in dual meets.

Of course, if Eisenhower comes into Pennsylvania competition they will spend at least the first year or two getting pushed around.

Both Knight wrestlers and fans are used to this—remembering the first two seasons of the sport. And, Knight fans remember well what happened after the wrestlers became more serious in their participation.

With this memory, there is little doubt that the Knights would come out fighting. And, given a little time to adjust to the tougher competition, they could well come out fighting and winning.