

Franklinville finish says much for Warrior matmen



with Dan Seroffsky

THE SURPRISING SUCCESS of the Salamanca wrestling team in the Franklinville Invitational Tournament last weekend served to point up two important facts; first, that Salamanca's wrestling team can be a competitive one, and second, that with some changes, the entire wrestling program at Salamanca can be up-graded tremendously.

A week ago, this column was devoted to a discussion for the need of an improved wrestling program at Salamanca. The results of the Franklinville tourney seem to lend support to the arguments advanced in that discussion. Certainly there was a big difference between the dismal showing in the Salamanca Invitational tournament by the Warriors and the second place finish turned in at Franklinville. One obvious difference, of course, was in the competition. The competition in the Salamanca tournament is of superior quality. A quick check of the weekly rankings show most of the teams on the Western New York wrestling poll were in the tourney field at Salamanca. Similarly, the number of sectional place winners who had earlier placed in the Salamanca tournament is surprisingly high. A year ago, about 80 of the wrestlers who competed in the Salamanca tourney placed in the sectionals.

The Franklinville tournament field was not as strong, and the caliber of wrestling was considerably different. A number of the Olean wrestlers who made it to the semifinal round of the Franklinville tournament never made it past the quarterfinals of the Salamanca tourney, and the Olean team is a strong one.

~~What the tourney results did point up was the difference between a good wrestler and a superior wrestler. The difference is simple. Superior wrestlers win the major tournaments, like the Salamanca tourney, and finish well in the intersectional qualifiers. Good wrestlers win in dual competition, in smaller tournaments, like the Franklinville tourney, and finish their seasons by placing in the sectionals.~~

WHAT SEPARATES A GOOD wrestler from a superior wrestler is the amount of time and training spent with the individual. A strong program, one which supports the wrestler, enables the wrestler to become better 'educated' in the sport, and leads to success. A program which fails to provide as much support, or which develops an indifference to the individual, will see the wrestler advance merely as far as his natural ability allows.

In an individual sport like wrestling, success has a direct correlation to the amount of effort the individual is willing to expend. Without a strong program, however, the individual with less natural talent suffers; as he does not get the benefit of close coaching to aid him in overcoming what his natural ability is lacking. From the Salamanca tourney are a number of examples. Keith Stearns is a tremendously talented individual, probably one of the best wrestlers in the entire state. Bruce Meyers has less natural talent, but the amount of time spent by coaches in teaching him how to succeed on the mat paid off with the outstanding wrestler trophy.

Similarly, the lack of a strong developmental program at Salamanca became apparent in the comparison between the two tournament finishes. Ward Wheeler was called by one official at the Salamanca tournament as one of the "quickest kids on his feet I've ever seen." Wheeler finished third at Franklinville. He failed to get past the second round at Salamanca. First year wrestler Joe Roosa won the Franklinville tournament, yet at Salamanca, his inexperience was obvious as he was eliminated in the first round.

THAT SALAMANCA HAS SOME highly talented wrestlers was obvious with the performance at Franklinville. That those wrestlers are insufficiently prepared was obvious with the performance in the Salamanca tourney. A program, therefore, that would offer more coaching and more extensive work at the junior high and junior varsity levels, would be of tremendous benefit to the individuals who wish to compete in the sport.

Again, an individual sport, such as wrestling, tennis, swimming, track or golf, depends entirely upon the interest of the individual involved. That the young men involved in the wrestling program have shown their willingness to cope with some less than ideal situations while at the same time putting forth the effort required to attain at least a minimal amount of success indicated that they are interested. To deny them the means to achieve higher goals when they have shown their interest in attaining those goals is to deny them a chance to reach their fullest potential.