

Ethics of National qualifying are questionable

Eight hungry teams took to the mats in the 24th Annual State University of New York Athletic Conference (SUNYAC) Wrestling Championships held at Potsdam State College on Friday and Saturday, February 10-11. For you non-wrestling fans, this meet was the determining point to see who would compete in the Nationals, which will be held at SUNY Binghamton later this month (February 24-25).

The format of the event is pretty simple -- the top three wrestlers for each weight class go to the Nationals. This year, Oswego State, coached by Jim Howard, will be represented by Doug Morse (190), Mark Glickman (heavyweight), and Pat Wittekind (134). After these athletes were selected, four more wrestlers were selected by the SUNY coaches as wild card entrants, but this year, something strange seems to be going on.

Before we mention any other Oswego wrestlers, or the main point of this column, let's first take a look at three of the grapplers who earned wild card spots from other schools. They are: Peter Rao (150 lbs., 15-7 overall record, 4th at SUNYAC's, Buffalo), Gary Bochner (142 lbs., 7-5 overall record, 4th at SUNYAC's, Binghamton), and Bill McHugh (134 lbs., 16-4 overall record, 4th at SUNYAC's, Oneonta). These guys have all been extremely hot on the mats, and they truly deserve to make the Nationals, based on their SUNYAC performances.

Now let's look at Oswego's three entrants for a wild card birth, and some facts on them. They are: Senior Terry Melia (118 lbs., 13-6 overall record), who, like the

above mentioned wrestlers, took fourth at SUNYAC's in a stacked weight class, junior Mike Coddington (126 lbs., 11-11 overall record), who also took a fourth at SUNYAC's, and lost a tough 2-1 overtime battle to the

mentor's choice as Oswego's wild card representative for the 1984 Nationals? You guessed it (and oh how surprising), Mark Howard at 142.

It seems to me that a fourth place finisher in the SUNYAC's (with a better overall record) would be the obvious choice to compete in the Nationals. Obvious choice unless extenuating circumstances arise, and that's what happened.

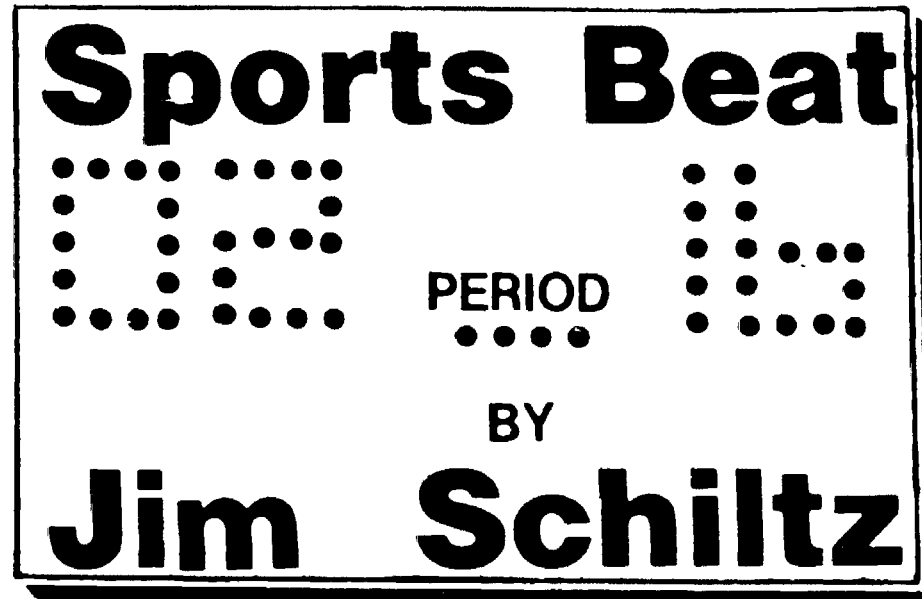
Coach Howard used a 1983 precedent that said a fifth place finisher can go to the Nationals and also based his decision on the fact that Mark Howard was an All-American in 1983.

So what we have is four SUNY representatives, three of them who took fourths at SUNYAC's (and were selected for Nationals based on their performance in the National Qualifier), and Howard, who, it seems clear to me, was selected on the basis of past performances.

This question must be asked here and now: Is there one set, standard criteria for judging and selecting a wild card representative for the Nationals?

What it looks like is that anyone can make it to the Nationals, not based on performance in the National Qualifier (SUNYAC's) or on this year's won-loss record, but on placement and honors from last year. Is this right? Should there be a criteria written out and strictly abided by every year for wild card selection?

Based on the proceedings that have already occurred, we should all ask ourselves, is there any credibility to the SUNY Conference if they neglect to send their best representatives to the Nationals?



eventual 126-pound class champion, Desmond Basnight (Oneonta), and senior Mark Howard (142 lbs., 11-9-1 record), the coach's son, who was wrestling in a weight class where the top three seeds finished in their predetermined order, but Howard (the fourth seed), finished in the fifth position.

So who was Coach Howard and the other SUNY