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Wrestlers dethroned as SUNYAC champs Place second, but 8 Golden Eagles advance to Division III nationals

by Andrew L. Simpson

Sports Editor

An old adage states, "Don't count your chickens before they're hatched." Perhaps the SUNY College at Brockport wrestling squad did just that last weekend in their first State University of New York Athletic Conference championship loss in eight years.

The NCAA Division III No. 1-ranked Golden Eagles came into the two-day tournament held in the Tuttle North Gymnasium in Brockport favored to secure their eighth straight title and their 14th in Don Murray's 17 years of coaching Brockport.

But sometimes things don't go as expected as Buffalo came up with their first win ever in the 27-year-old tournament. The Bulls totaled 130.5 points to Brockport's second place 121 points.

"I think there is the possibility we may have been a little overconfident," confided Murray, "but then again I can't read their minds."

The Eagles were also idle since Jan. 31, when they defeated SUNY Binghamton 44-3 and may have been rusty because they wrestled substantially better Saturday compared to Friday. They were behind the Bulls 114-73.5 after Friday's competition, but only lost the tournament by 9.5 points.

"We may have been overtrained which would have explained why we performed better Saturday," remarked Murray. "I really worked them hard in practice this past week."

Although the Eagles failed in their bid to win the tournament, eight Golden Eagles were selected to represent Brockport March 6 and 7, in the NCAA Division III nationals in Buffalo.

The SUNYAC weight class champions are included in the tournament as well as the top three finishers in each weight class. A wrestler can also receive a "wild card" bid into the national tournament.

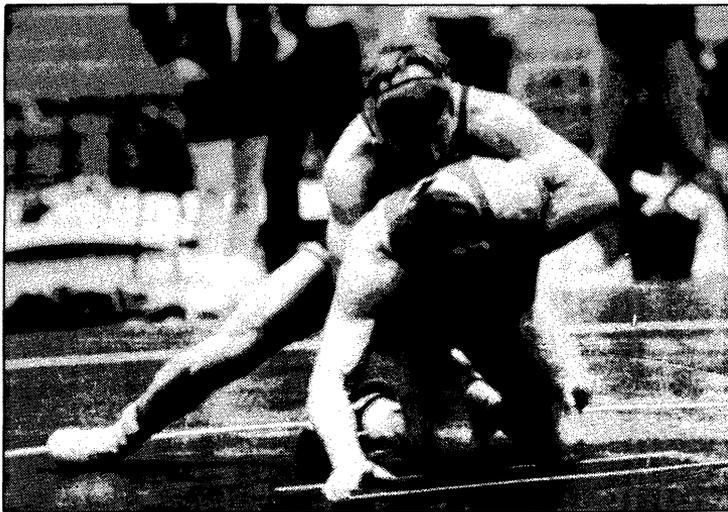
Brockport's 150-pound Dave Recor, 158-pound John Leone and 167-pound Todd Slade all won their respective bouts to earn a spot in the national tournament; both Jose Munoz (126) and Keith Peavey (134) placed third to earn a spot; Troy Monks (118), Timm Slade (177) and Rusty Middlebrook (heavyweight) earned a wildcard selection in the competition.

The Buffalo Bulls did not have any individual winners, but they totaled four second-place finishes and two third-place finishes to secure the narrow win.

"If we had to lose a tournament I would rather it be this one than the nationals," said Murray. "I don't care if Buffalo is ranked No. 1 because they don't have the horses to win it (the nationals)."

Recor, who brought a 19-4 season record into the 150-pound title bout, was noticeably cautious in his game plan for Buffalo's Dave Hickson. Hickson, who brought a 12-2 season record into the match and was a 1985 All-American selection, was also wary of his opponent's abilities.

After a scoreless standup first period and a scoreless second period, Recor tallied the bout's first points as he made it 2-0 on an escape from his defensive position on the mat. The score proved to "break the ice" as both wrestlers became more aggressive. Recor was the better, though, as he held on to complete the match with a 6-3 decision over the senior.



A Brockport wrestler (top) grapples during the SUNYAC championships last weekend. It was a bittersweet tournament for the Eagles as they placed second but will send eight wrestlers to the nationals March 6 and 7. (Photo by Anthony Fedele)

Unlike Recor's strategy, senior John Leone was aggressive throughout his 158-pound title match against Buffalo's Andy Sharp. Leone boasted a 22-2 season record and Sharp was no match. Although the Buffalo junior scored two points at the outset of the match, Leone dominated the rest of the contest on his way to a pin at 4:38.

Leone had faced Sharp Nov. 15 in the Eagles' first dual meet of the season and the senior recorded a technical fall over

Sharp.

Todd Slade's 167-pound match directly followed Leone's contest and was almost a duplicate of his teammates bout.

After a 2-2 first period and several injury timeouts for Oneonta's Wayne Ebanks, Slade did virtually everything right in his 20-6 decision. Slade was close to pinning Ebanks in the final seconds of the third period, but time ran out and he had to settle for a decision.

Albany's 177-pound Marty Pidel was named the tournament's outstanding wrestler. The senior defeated Cortland's Jim Hunter 3-1 in the 177-pound title match.

The Golden Eagles are inactive this weekend, but return to wrestling action March 6 in the NCAA Division III nationals.

The Eagles placed second in the tournament last year, but have won it four times under the guidance of Murray.