

Wrestlers capture first league crown



College Relations

The Cortland State wrestlers, capturing six of the ten individual titles, won its first league crown in nine years during the 28th Annual State University of New York Athletic Conference Wrestling Championships in Corey Gymnasium on Friday and Saturday.

The Red Dragons tallied 146.25 points, easily outpacing Brockport and Oswego, who tied for second with 113.75 points. Oneonta finished fourth with 94.50, followed by Binghamton with 78 and Potsdam with 26.50.

Cortland's six champions — the most in a single year by the Dragons since their 1963 title unit which included current Oneonta coach Al Sosa — all receive automatic berths in the NCAA Division III Wrestling Championships

at Wheaton (IL) College on Mar. 4-5.

Earning SUNYAC champion laurels were: 134-pound Matt DeVincenzo; 142-pound Joe Guardino, 158-pound Sean Yengo, 167-pound Mike Ford, 177-pound Randy Sabourin and 190-pound Todd McArdell. The sextet will be joined at the nationals by Red Dragon 150-pounder third place finisher Dave Zaricny, who received one of nine "wild card" bids to the NCAA's voted on by the SUNYAC coaches at the conclusion of the league meet.

"I am very pleased with our performance as a team," said Cortland coach Gene Nighman, who narrowly missed out on SUNYAC Coach of the Year honors. Oswego's Jim Howard, who was almost apologetic in earning the award instead of

Nighman, took the honor on criteria established beforehand by the SUNYAC coaches.

"Our guys peaked at the right time and pulled together as a team," added Nighman. "Whenever you are out six guys in the finals and win all six, it's really amazing. Coming in, yes, we were favorites. But we had close matches this season with Oneonta and Oswego. We had to perform well to win the title and we did."

DeVincenzo, a senior, started Cortland's string of six titles with a 3-2 verdict over Kevin Foster of Brockport. The Red Dragon 134-pounder, plagued by shoulder and neck ailments, was wrestling for just the fourth time since the New York State meet in January. But the victory was his second this year over Foster. Guardino, meanwhile, edged

Brockport's Joe DiSano 2-1 for the 142-pound crown.

"Matt wrestled really smart," said Nighman. "He wrestled a very controlled, no-mistake match. At 142, Joe is really wrestling up to his capabilities. This is the best I've seen him wrestle. He opened up offensively. His weight class was really tight — the top four seeds were all pretty close. Joe was seeded first."

Cortland junior Sean Yengo at 158 totally dominated his opponent, Pat Luba from Oswego, with a 13-0 superior decision. Yengo nearly pinned Luba on a couple of occasions during the match.

Senior tri-captain Mike Ford, seeded fourth at 167, walked away with the title after a 5-2 win over Oneonta's Nick Greveling. Meanwhile, at 177, Sabourin

was wrestling for the first time this season when he took the title by defeating Oswego's Tom Chirayath 13-1.

Cortland stalwart McArdell, at 190, captured his second straight SUNYAC title without having been scored upon this weekend. He registered a decisive 8-0 victory over Brockport's Andre Dunlap on Saturday afternoon.

"Ford's performance at 167 was very similar to Guardino's at 142," Nighman noted. "Ford opened up and wrestled up to his capabilities. Sabourin, at 177, was a pleasant surprise because he didn't wrestle all season. He wrestled last season at 167. Todd did what was expected of him at 190. He performed well."