

Division 3 Tourney at SUNY

Mat king begging an invite

By FRANK ROESSNER

There are supposed to be six former champions returning for next weekend's National Collegiate Athletic Association Division III wrestling championships at SUNY-Binghamton, but the number may be reduced to five if the NCAA rulesmakers see fit to disqualify Montclair (N.J.) State's Vince Tundo.

Tundo, named Outstanding Wrestler after winning the 126-pound championship at Coe (Iowa) College last season, has been on a rocky road ever since.

He wasn't in school for the first semester this year, then had to undergo knee surgery in January after returning to Montclair. He wrestled in only one dual meet, and lost, and he couldn't beat out a teammate for the 126 berth in the recent conference tournament.

Which puts him in a bind as far as the NCAA "admission standards" go, because the rules say that a wrestler must have a minimum won-loss record of .600 or must have placed third or higher in a conference tournament.

Montclair Coach Larry Sciacchetano counted on the NCAA granting Tundo a "hardship" ticket to the national tournament, but so far the NCAA has stuck by its national standards and refused to give Tundo a go-ahead to compete at SUNY-Binghamton.

"I really don't know what the outcome will be," said host coach Steve Erber



Vince Tundo

yesterday. The SUNY-Binghamton mentor has been monitoring the communications between Sciacchetano and the NCAA all week and yesterday decided, "We won't know if Tundo can wrestle or not until the teams start arriving on Thursday. We'll have an NCAA representative here who'll probably make the final decision."

One of the other returning champs is Gettysburg's (Pa.) Craig Helmuth, who won the 126-pound crown two years ago and then bowed to Tundo in the finals last season. Both he and Tundo were slated to compete at 126 again this season.

The other champs:

- Eric Mast of Elizabethtown (Pa.) State, who was the 118-pound king in 1974, but has failed to place the last two seasons at 126 (1975) and back at 118 (last year).

- Rick Freitas of Montclair State, who'll try to defend the 142-pound title he won last year. He's only 12-8 so far this season, one of his conquerors being Union-Endicott grad Scott DePersis, who's now the 150-pounder for Massachusetts Maritime.

- Jim Weir of Cleveland's John Carroll University returns to defend his 158-pound honors. He also placed sixth in the all-division nationals last season and is 16-1 this year.

- Brad Bowman, also of John Carroll, was a 1975 champion at 177 pounds but placed second to Montclair's Dom Di-gioacchino after suffering a knee injury in the semifinals.

To date, there are more than 400 wrestlers entered from 85 colleges and universities. Montclair State won the team title last year, John Carroll the year before — and both look like prime contenders again this season.