

Atmosphere at Nationals Make Up Rhapsody in Sweat and Brawn

A rhapsody in sweat and brawn.

Glistening bodies, straining muscles . . . rolling, tossing . . . breaking holds, seeking holds . . . weaving to the music of grunts and gasping breath. Feet scrape upon the mats . . . flesh rubs and burns on the canvas . . . the stench of sweating bodies fills the air. From the bleachers comes a low murmur of comments . . . an occasional swell of approving voices . . . here and there, a call of encouragement.

This is the picture of the gym on the night of the Nationals. A cold, dismal rain falls outside. The uncertain light from the ceiling loses itself in the gloomy depths of the building. The bleachers are partially filled with spectators.

How different this crowd from the usual noisy mob that throngs to the meets. No cheers, not cat-calls, no excitement. Quietly, the people watch the panorama before them. Some of them comment quietly; others sit silently, drawing absently on empty pipes; while still others sprawl back on overcoats, their attention riveted on the wrestlers.

A student, his coat rain-soaked and his hat dripping, comes into the gym. He walks around the side and sits on one of the benches, his eyes never leaving the groups on the mats. Water drips from his hat and runs down his face. He does not notice, he is too intent on the scene before him.

On the floor, contenders for the Nationals are going thru their final paces. There are two groups of them on the mats at a time. Struggling, rolling, they concentrate entirely on their work. The pairs are alone, as far as they themselves are concerned. Their world consists of a small section of canvas; their life and existence is struggle; their only goal, perfect co-ordination of mind and muscle.

Their particular aim lies in pinning the shoulders—those elusive shoulders—of their opponent to the mat. Months of training, long hours of practice, gruelling workouts have paved their way to this hallowed bit of canvas. And now the shadow of the goal falls on their straining bodies—national honors.