

# Veteran Pioneer squad should pace revamped ECIC

By TOM ROOF

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During four of the past five seasons, Pioneer Central School has finished among the top 10 teams in final Times Herald Big 30 wrestling poll — thrice being ranked as high as No. 5 (1984-85, '86-87 and '88-89).

This season should be no different.

While the Erie County Interscholastic Conference has taken on some major revisions, Pioneer remains a constant.

"I think this should be one of our strongest teams in at least five years," maintains sixth-year head coach Ron Brunner. "This team has a lot of years of experience." **12-7-89**

Indeed, with nine starters returning from last year's 11-2 team, Pioneer ranks as one of the top contenders in Section 6, a fact supported by its No. 2 pre-season ranking behind powerful Falconer in the *Wrestling Review of Western New York*.

"If we keep everyone healthy, we'll be all right," said Brunner, who boasts a 46-16 coaching record. "Right now, we're pretty well balanced."

Pioneer will be competing in the realigned ECIC Division II. The league consolidated its four divisions of past years into three (by enrollment) with Pioneer now finding itself in a division with Lake Shore, Williamsville North, Depew, Williamsville East, Clarence, Iroquois, Maryvale and Amherst.

"I like the new setup," Brunner added. "We get to wrestle some different teams and some larger schools and I think it's good for the program."

Competing in Division I will be Orchard Park, Sweet Home, Lancaster, Frontier, West Seneca East, West Seneca West, Hamburg and Jamestown. Division III will consist of Williamsville South, Springville, Cheektowaga, Alden, East Aurora, Holland, Eden and Lackawanna.

Pioneer was 11-1 in Division III last year, placing second behind Clarence (12-0).

Meanwhile, Salamanca, Olean and Gowanda are prepping for another season in the Southern Tier Division I League, while Randolph and new coach Dick Anderson get set to open another Southern Tier Div. II season.

Falconer, with six Section 6 qualifiers returning, including runners-up David Brainard and Marty Schwab, is favored to defend its Div. I title. Maple Grove has been tabbed as the team to beat in Div. II.

Overall, the Southern Tier had 16 place-finishers in last year's Section 6 tournament and returns four others in addition to Brainard and Schwab — champions Steve Felt (119) of Salamanca and Jon Penhollow (177) of Cassadaga Valley, third-place finisher Bob Ball (98) of Fredonia, and fourth-place finisher Joe Conti (91) of Fredonia.

## ECIC DIVISION II

PIONEER: Anchoring a solid lineup for

Brunner will be four returning Division III-IV sectional qualifying tournament champions — seniors Terry Green (24-9) at 145, Scott Nelson (31-3) at 112 and Dan Hoffman (21-7, fourth in Sec. 6) at 177, and sophomore Chris Raiber (22-10) at 112.

Also returning are sectional qualifiers Erik Pump (21-10, junior) at 126 and Kevin Nelson (12-4, freshman) at 105, along with juniors Brandon Hoffman (13-12) at 132, Jeff Hackett (8-13) at 155, and senior Pete Szumigala (11-13) at 215.

Rounding out the lineup will be sophomore heavyweight Keith Bocharski and promising 138-pound freshman Ben Heckathorn, who is coming off a 17-2 junior varsity season.

## SOUTHERN TIER DIV. I

GOWANDA: Only five lettermen return for new head coach Bill Hewitt from a 13-2 team that lost only to Southwestern and Falconer.

Still, Hewitt, an assistant here the past three seasons who replaces Mike Leous, believes Gowanda could surprise a few teams.

"I think we're in good shape and will beat a few people," he said. "But we can't afford to lose anyone."

While graduation claimed two of Gowanda's more productive wrestlers in Mike Gabel (29-6) and Darren Swetz (19-13), four others will also be missing — heavyweight Ed Moses (13-11), who decided to play basketball, 126-pounder Sam Menschel (12-10), Jim Herniman (11-13) and Benji Tallchief (15-8).

Meanwhile, returning are senior Jamie Kota (26-4) at 112, junior Brian Geiger (6-7-1) at 145, Jason Geiger (17-10) at 119, Sam Campbell at 132 and senior Heath Garlow at heavyweight. Kota, a three-time sectional qualifier — placing fourth two years ago — boasts an 82-30 career record.

Among the new faces to watch for is 155-pound freshman Sean Gabel, a state runner-up in the Junior Olympic freestyle championships two years ago.

OLEAN HIGH: With forfeits lurking at three weight classes (98, 105, 112) another long season awaits ninth-year head Jim Myers, whose teams has suffered similiar problems the past three seasons.

Still, Myers remains surprisingly upbeat.

"Now that I look and see what we have coming up through our junior high program, I'm very encouraged," he said. "We've gone through some lean years when the numbers were down, and we will again this year, but that's changing now. We should be getting some good numbers and some pretty good wrestlers into the varsity program over the next couple of years." **12-7-89**

As far as this year is concerned, Myers is just looking for improvement from a

team that has no seniors and only one junior. "Forfeiting the first three weights puts us in a whole right away and its hard to win when you give up that many points," he said. "But we're young and can only get better."

The top returning winner from last year's 1-12-1 team is 167-pound sophomore Wesley Spencer (12-15). Other returnees include sophomores Steve Prescott (3-4) at 119, Greg Swick at 126 and Isaac Shorter at 145.

SALAMANCA: Felt is one of Western New York's scappiest wrestlers and was the surprise the Section 6 tournament last year when he won the 119-pound title. He has jumped up to 132, but will likely drop to 126 when needed for the postseason tournaments.

"He has a tough act to follow and he's going to have to realize he has to work just as hard this year," said head coach Rich Morton. "He just needs to set his mind to it."

Felt, 36-6 a year ago and 86-43-3 for his career, is only of only four starters back off a 5-11 team. Others returning include freshman Jim Kennedy (7-11) at 98 and seniors John Wilson (7-7) at 155 and Chris Prybylo (5-15) at 167. The lineup has been bolstered by the addition of sophomore transfer Mike Steinbar (7-11) from Cattaraugus.

Still, Morton admits there are so many holes to fill that improving on last year's record could be difficult.

"We only have 10 kids out," he said. "We're going to be giving away too many points because of forfeits to do much... we'll need about five pins just to stay in a match. That's our only salvation."

## SOUTHERN TIER DIV. II

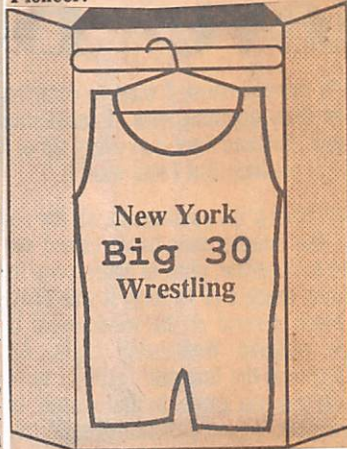
RANDOLPH: Anderson who replaces Ken Richir, who left after one season and a 5-8 record, inherits a team returning just four staters — sophomore Mike Doubek (21-10) at 119, juniors Brett Beightol at 132 and Jack Lockwood at 155, and senior Matt Weaver (8-14-2) at 126.

Four other lettermen who were expected to be back are off the team for various reasons, including 15-match winner Troy Pitts with a knee injury.

"We're working hard, but we have seven first-year wrestlers who are trying to learn fast... and they're going to have too," Anderson said.

Among the newcomers are 98-pounders Jeremy Luce (sophomore) and Chris Valvo (seventh grade), 105-pounders Bill Mack (freshman) and John Reichard (senior), 112-pounder Jeremy Pearson (junior), 145-pounder Joe Young (junior), 167-pounder Chris Faust (sophomore) and heavyweight Brian Nieman (senior).

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the second installment of a three-part series previewing the 25 Big 30 high school wrestling teams. Today's segment focuses on the Southern Tier League and ECIC member Pioneer.



5-16-79

Nobody Asked me But... Portville Central School will have an old master — Bob Klucik — back as its wrestling coach, and he would like to reinstate (if that is the proper way to put it) Olean High School on the Portville schedule. Of course, Klucik is not as yet officially the Portville coach, but make no mistake about it, he is "The Man," and he wants Olean and he also wants Portville back in the Chautauqua-Cattaraugus Interscholastic Conference, where he feels it belongs. Under the other Portville wrestling regime, regretfully, Portville dropped Olean. But, again, this is a new regime, so Olean's director of athletics, Matt Conte, could be persuaded to let bygones be bygones.