



Staff Photo—Bill Grimes

Joshior Fujita Awaits Attack

'WILD EASTERN' COWPOKE

This 'Dude' Can't Lose

By FRANK HYLAND

Atlanta Journal Staff Writer

AUBURN, Ala. — The lore of the Old West has always treasured the Eastern dude, but Oklahoma is carrying that bit of tradition to ridiculous lengths these days.



Frank Hyland

Okla. State, for example, keys its wrestling team around a pair of twins and a Far Eastern dude. That's Far East as in the Orient. As in Japan.

The dude is a fellow named Joshior Fujita, and he shoots strictly from the hip when it comes to wrestling.

Fujita is perhaps the best on the best team in college wrestling. He has been wrestling with the Cowpokes for one season now. He has never lost. His coach goes so far as to say that, not only is he undefeated, but that he has never even been close to being beaten.

AT LEAST no one came close going into the finals of the NCAA national wrestling championships here Saturday.

Now, the question logically arises as just how Joshior Fujita of Hachinohe, Japan, came to be a Cowboy from Stillwater, Okla.

It's simple.

"Because Yojiro told me about Okla. State," Fujita says, most inscrutably.

Yojiro Uetake was one of the greatest wrestlers ever in the United States, or for that matter, the world. He won three NCAA titles while at Okla. State. He won Olympic gold medals in both the 1964 and 1968 games.

Fujita beat him one time in an Olympic preliminary match. Perhaps to get him out of his hair, Uetake recommended he go west, like to the Western United States.

Fujita showed up on the Stillwater campus last year and, in the grand tradition of the Big Eight, was redshirted for a year. The idea was to get him accustomed to wrestling American style as opposed to the way they wrestle everywhere else in the world.

"IT WAS very difficult at first," said Fujita, who was a two-time schoolboy champ in Japan. "The free style of wrestling is much different from the way they wrestle here.

"At first I didn't like it (like the weather in Oklahoma that he doesn't like), but I do now. I think perhaps this style is better for me."

Technically, he is a freshman this year. Thanks to the redshirt and the year of college in Japan, he is really a junior. It tells in the way he manhandles the field in every tournament he enters.

It also tells in the way his coach, Tom Chesbro, juggled his team to get Fujita in the lineup, as though he could keep him out.

Because Fujita was around, Chesbro took one of the twins, Wayne Keller, and pushed him up a weight. That's like moving Babe Ruth to sixth in the lineup. Keller had won 63 straight matches going into Saturday's finals and had two straight NCAA titles under his belt. In 1968 he was voted the outstanding wrestler in the NCAA.

"IT MADE us a stronger team," said Chesbro. Did it ever! The Cowboys almost won the team title a day ahead of time, on Friday. Only a last minute bingle by Iowa State kept it close.

Fujita will be back next year, too, much to the consternation of the rest of the NCAA. It raises a question.

How do you stop Fujita and the Cowboys?

"Send him—send all of them—back to Japan," quipped one NCAA coach. "That's the only way I know."