

41st NCAA Wrestling Tourney Opens Thursday

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AUBURN, Ala. — About 315 wrestlers gathered here Wednesday for the start at 1 p.m. (CST) Thursday of the 41st annual National Collegiate Wrestling Tournament, the first ever in which the entire field had to come through a round of qualifying tournaments two weeks ago.

The seven regional university division meets and the National Collegiate Athletic Assn. small college tournament weeded out a flock of accomplished contestants that normally would be here bidding for one of the 10 coveted individual titles.

Theoretically, it also cut out some of the chaff that has threatened to swell this meet into the 400 plus range of entries in recent years. It also unexpectedly nailed some fine wrestlers, but all five of the champions returning from last year's nationals at Northwestern University made it.

One limped in as a runnerup in his regional and three have been chased, through circumstances, to different weights from which they won their crowns last year.

But they're here, one way or another, for the first NCAA national mat meet ever staged in the deep south and the second NCAA national tournament of any kind ever conducted in Dixie. The other was a track meet at Tennessee a few years ago.

But, while this meet has abundant firsts, it appears likely to bestow the title back onto an old standby. Oklahoma State has won the NCAA crown 26 times over the past 40 years, but not since 1968.

In the meantime, Iowa State has won

team championships two years in a row and defeated the Cowboys twice in dual meets this season during an undefeated campaign.

But the Cowboys have tournament strength in the presence of three returning champions and a Japanese native who forced two of the defending champions up the ladder enroute to an undefeated season.

Oklahoma State asserted its tournament supremacy by winning the Big Eight Conference championship over Iowa State and, two weeks later, the regional at Ames and, if the Cowboys don't win this title come Saturday night, it'll rank as a greater upset than Kansas defeating UCLA in the National Collegiate basketball tournament, semifinals of which are Thursday in Houston's Astrodome.

Oklahoma State's twin brothers, Dwayne and Darrell Keller, won the championships last year at 126 and 134, respectively, and, for Dwayne, it was his second title. He'd won his first as a sophomore two years previously, before sitting out the 1968-69 season.

They'll be at 134 and 142 this year because OSU's Yoshiro Fujita is at 126. It means that there's no way all five defending champions can repeat.

Also at 142 is the University of Washington's Larry Owings, who conquered unbeatable Dan Gable of Iowa State in the dramatic finals at that weight 13-11 last year. Owings is unbeaten in dual meets this year although he bowed in a quarterfinal round match in the Midlands tournament in December while Darrell Keller reached the nationals after forfeiting the regional championship bout and settling for second place to protect an in-



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jured shoulder.

On the other hand, Dwayne Keller has set a school record for consecutive victories, now up into the 60s.

The Cowboys' other 1970 champion is 177-pounder Geoff Baum, who will go at that weight, presumably, because he failed twice to defeat Iowa State 190-pounder Ben Peterson this year.

Baum won the title at 190 last year and Peterson was fourth.

Michigan State's Greg Johnson, a surprise winner at 118 last year, also has qualified again as a regional champion, but one that was beaten several times during the season.

If Oklahoma State doesn't win the team title there's no logical place to turn for a second choice. It could be Iowa State or Big Ten champion Michigan State or even Eastern Intercollegiate champion Penn State which qualified five through the regional at Princeton.

Penn State Coach Bill Koll, former University of Northern Iowa mentor, commented, "We were flat at the qualifying tournament. There wasn't any team title involved



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and you only had to finish in the top five to qualify for the nationals."

But he expects his five entries (Big Eight powers, Oklahoma, Oklahoma State and Iowa State have 10, 9 and 9, respectively) to make strong showings.

The Nittany Lions were undefeated in dual meets this year with 10 victories and a tie against Navy, whom they nosed out for the Eastern crown. It ran Koll's record there to 54 wins, 12 losses and 5 ties in seven years.

Iowa State's entries include two who placed in recent NCAA meets in addition to Peterson. They are Phil Parker, third at 134 last year, and Carl Adams, fifth at 150 in 1969.

Only Peterson and heavyweight Geary Murdock are undefeated for the year. Other Iowa State entries are Larry Munger, 126; Doug Moses, giving the Cyclones a former West Waterloo High wrestler at 142 for the second straight year; Dave Bock, 150; and freshmen Rich Binek and Al Nacin at 167 and 177, respectively.

"Do not count Iowa State out of contention," warns Coach Harold Nichols. "These young men have a lot of pride and will not



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yield to anyone without a terrific battle. We can still win a third straight year if all nine men get every point for which they have a potential."

The University of Iowa, which finished fifth last year, has only two entries this year — 118-pounder Dan Sherman and 190-pounder Paul Zander.

The University of Northern Iowa also has two entries — National College Division champion Clint Young at 158 and fifth place finisher Randy Omvig at 190.

The Hawkeyes' best wrestler, perhaps, Big Ten 177-pound champion Steve DeVries, who would have provided Baum with a strong argument, was one of the many regional tournament victims.

The regionals, themselves, will be on trial at Auburn, as well as the ability of a Southern, football oriented university to host and support a national mat tournament. It is off to an enthusiastic start with some 1,000 season tickets already sold.

The regionals trimmed each starting bracket to 32 wrestlers with qualifiers apportioned among the various weights in regionals from two to five each. Already five of the qualifiers have indicated they don't plan to show up — hence the 315 figure.

While the result was to eliminate some wrestlers of less than national tournament calibre it may also have encouraged some

lesser matmen who normally would have stayed home to come.

The University of Massachusetts, for instance, got seven wrestlers through the New England regional at Harvard where fewer than 40 wrestlers tried to qualify. The top two in each state were awarded trips to Auburn, and, in one weight, there were only two wrestlers.

Before the regionals, there were 33 1970 NCAA placemen still competing this season. In addition to the five champions there were four runnersup from last year — Ray Stapp of Oklahoma State, 118; Bruce Trammell of Ohio University, 158; Jim Crumley of Oregon State, 177, and Greg Wojciechowski of Toledo, heavyweight. Apparently all of them made it this year.

The tournament awards six places in each weight. The opening session on eight mats begins at 1 p.m. Thursday, followed by the second round on eight mats at 7:30 Thursday, the quarterfinals on four mats at 1 p.m. Friday, the semifinals and consolation preliminaries at 7 Friday, the consolations for third through sixth places at 1:30 p.m. Saturday and the championship matches beginning at 7 p.m. Saturday in 12,000 seat Memorial Auditorium.

This Central Eastern Alabama town, less than 355 miles from Georgia, is in the Central time zone.