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# Oswegonian Sports



## Six Lakers qualify for Nationals

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The Oswego State Lakers Wrestling Team hosted the Fifth Annual Empire Collegiate Wrestling Conference Tournament this past Saturday at Laker Hall. The Laker matmen had six national qualifiers and crowned one individual champion, Mike DeBellis at 150 lbs. DeBellis defeated 1995 national runner-up Joe Telesky from Brockport in the finals in sudden death overtime. This was DeBellis' second victory over Telesky this season. For his efforts DeBellis was named Most Outstanding Wrestler for the tournament. When asked about his performance DeBellis replied "It

was nice to be able to win the conference title in front of the home crowd my senior season. Now its time to get ready for the nationals." Four other Lakers took second in the tournament and will join DeBellis at the NCAA Championships. They are senior co-captain Keith Smith at 167, and freshman Drew Place at 177 pounds. Taking third and earning a wild card selection is senior Craig Kaper at 188 pounds.

DeBellis, the number one seed, earned his trip to the finals by defeating Aaron Cook of Cortland 7-4 in the semifinals. In the finals with the score tied 1-1 after regulation, the match entered sudden death overtime. At the conclusion of the two minute sudden death period, the score was still knotted at one apiece. In the thirty second tiebreaker period, DeBellis won the coin toss and chose the bottom position. It took DeBellis just six seconds to escape from Telesky to earn the conference title.

Senior co-captain Mike Kohl defeated Tim Ellsworth of Oneonta 8-1, Mike Steinbar of Ithaca by fall and RIT's Tim Tyler 2-1, only losing a hard fought decision to Cortland's Brian Roggie who's currently ranked second nationally at 126. Kohl who was an All-American last season and is looking for an even better finish this season. "I was an All-American last season and would like to improve on that performance with a trip to the finals at Nationals", stated Kohl after his second place conference finish.

Another second place finisher who also logged a 3-1 record on the day was junior Don Spaulding at 134 lbs. Spaulding's only defeat came in the first round at the hands of Brockport's Ron Vosburg who is ranked second nationally at 134. Spaulding defeated Derek Donegan of Ithaca 17-1 in the first round. In the semifinals he put away Justin Lynn of RIT, 10-7. In the true second bout, Spaulding handled Cortland's Scott Ferris 16-8. This will be Spaulding's second trip to the national tournament as he qualified in 1994 at the same weight. When asked about his goals for the nationals Spaulding said "It's nice to be able to return to the nationals, but I won't be satisfied with anything less than a top five finish in Cortland."

Also logging second place finished were two Johnson City high school products junior Keith Smith and freshman Drew Place. Both Smith and Place went 2-1 on the day to finish second and earn their trip to the nationals. Smith received a bye in the first round and then defeated Todd Scorzafava 7-0 in the semifinals before dropping a 5-3 decision to Jack Harbold of Brockport. In his true second bout he received a medical forfeit over Cortland's Shayne Bogardus. Place defeated Ithaca's Brent Fletcher by fall in the first round and had an exciting 3-2 victory over Binghamton's Jim Twichell in the semifinals before losing to Brockport's Tom Murphy 4-0 in the finals match. This will be the second trip to the NCAA's for Smith while the true freshman Place will be making his first trip to the tournament. When asked about his two upper weights Oswego coach Mike Howard said, "Both Drew and Smitty have had excellent seasons and both should walk away from Cortland with All American honors."

Also qualifying for the NCAA's with a strong third place finish at an extremely tough 188 pounds, is senior returning All-American Craig Kaper. Kaper went 3-1 on the day, opening with a win by fall over Joe Gabriel of Oneonta, before dropping a 7-1 decision to Binghamton's Jason Goldman. Kaper came back with an 11-1 victory over RIT's Terry Hassler and a pin of Brockport's Andrew Corbett to finish in third place. Kaper will be making his second consecutive trip to the NCAA championships. Kaper says, "It's great to return to the nationals for the second straight year and I would like to improve on my seventh place a year ago."

Other Laker grapplers to earn All-Conference honors in the tournament were Shawn Akley fifth at 158, Matt Soboloski fifth at 190 and Alan Bush who was sixth at heavy weight. The Lakers finished third overall as a team with 111.5 points. Claiming the conference team title was Brockport with 146.5 points followed by Cortland with 128.5 points, Oswego, Binghamton with 103 points, Ithaca with 74.5 points, RIT 68.5 points and Oneonta with 35 points. "Our team wrestled a very solid tournament," Coach Howard had to say after the tournament, "And by a qualifying six of our athletes for the nationals, we have set our self up for a realistic shot at placing in the top four at the national championship."

The Lakers' matmen have two weeks to prepare before they travel to SUNY Cortland for the NCAA Division III Wrestling Championships on March 1st and 2nd. The Oswego team and coaches would like to thank everyone who helped to make the conference tournament a success and all of our fans who came out and supported us.

### Mike Howard named ECWC Wrestling Coach of the Year



### Coach of the Year

Mike Howard, head coach of the Oswego State Laker team was named the Empire Collegiate Wrestling Conference coach of the year for 1995-1996. Howard in his seventh season as head coach, led his grapplers to a 16-7-1 record and a current overall national ranking of 18th nationally. Other outstanding performances logged by the Lakers under coach Howard include a second place finish at the Springfield Tournament, fourth place in the Florida College Duals and fifth at the New York State Intercollegiate Tournament. Howard also has six wrestlers qualified for the NCAA III Championships which will be held in Cortland on March 1st and 2nd. The award is voted on by all of the coaches in the conference and is given annually. Senior co-captain Mike DeBellis had this to say on coach Howard, "Coach has done an outstanding job this season and he deserves all of the accolades that come his way. He's done a lot for all of our guys and hopefully its just the first of many awards." Coach Howard lives in Minetto with his wife SueAnn and their three lovely children Mike, Brittany and Matt. Congratulations coach!