

Last stand

National Meet a fitting farewell for Pointer trio

By DON FRIDAY
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Dave Carlson, Colin Green and Travis Ebner have been the bedrock of the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point wrestling program during the past four years.

The senior trio, who have combined for 328 wins and only 118 losses, have helped coach Marty Loy's Pointers attain national prominence in the sport.

The three are anxiously awaiting the start of an event which will put a fitting climax on their careers — the NCAA Division III National Championships which UW-SP is hosting for the first time at Quandt Fieldhouse on Friday and Saturday.

The talented threesome, as it turns out, have a lot in common.

■ All three rank among the top five in career wins. Carlson (115-47) is second all-time behind Tom Weix (121-37-1, 1987-1992), with Ebner (108-37-3) third and Green (105-34) fourth.

■ All three excelled in football as well as wrestling in high school.

■ All three have done the job in the classroom with cumulative grade point averages ranging from 2.8 to 3.2.

■ All three are planning teaching-coaching careers after graduating from the university.

Competing in the national tournament is nothing new to the three Pointers, all of whom have been there before. They hope to use that experience to advantage as they pursue their goals of winning titles this weekend.

Carlson, a native of Maple Grove, Minn., who has a 29-7 record at 167 pounds, is concentrating on his mental approach.

"This will be my third time in the nationals," he said. "The first time you tend to think you are getting into some huge event with everything riding on the outcome. Now, I'm looking at it as just another tournament. It's important, sure, but we've been in a lot of big meets this season."

Carlson, 2-4 in his previous two national outings, tabs Eric Reed of UW-La Crosse and Randy Eastman of Augsburg, Minn., who was fifth in the national last year, among the favorites in his weight class.

"I'm 0-3 against Reed but two of the losses were in overtime and could have gone either way," he said. "If we wrestled 10 times, it would probably turn out 50-50."

Carlson, the only fifth-year senior among the three, credits his development in the sport to proper guidance early in his career and just plain hard work.

"I've been wrestling since the fifth grade," he said. "I went to a small private grade school and Bob Smith, the man who started the program, taught me to fight hard and never give up."

"I don't have a lot of wrestling talent. My biggest

gifts are perseverance and hard work. When you are out there on the mat, it's all up to you."

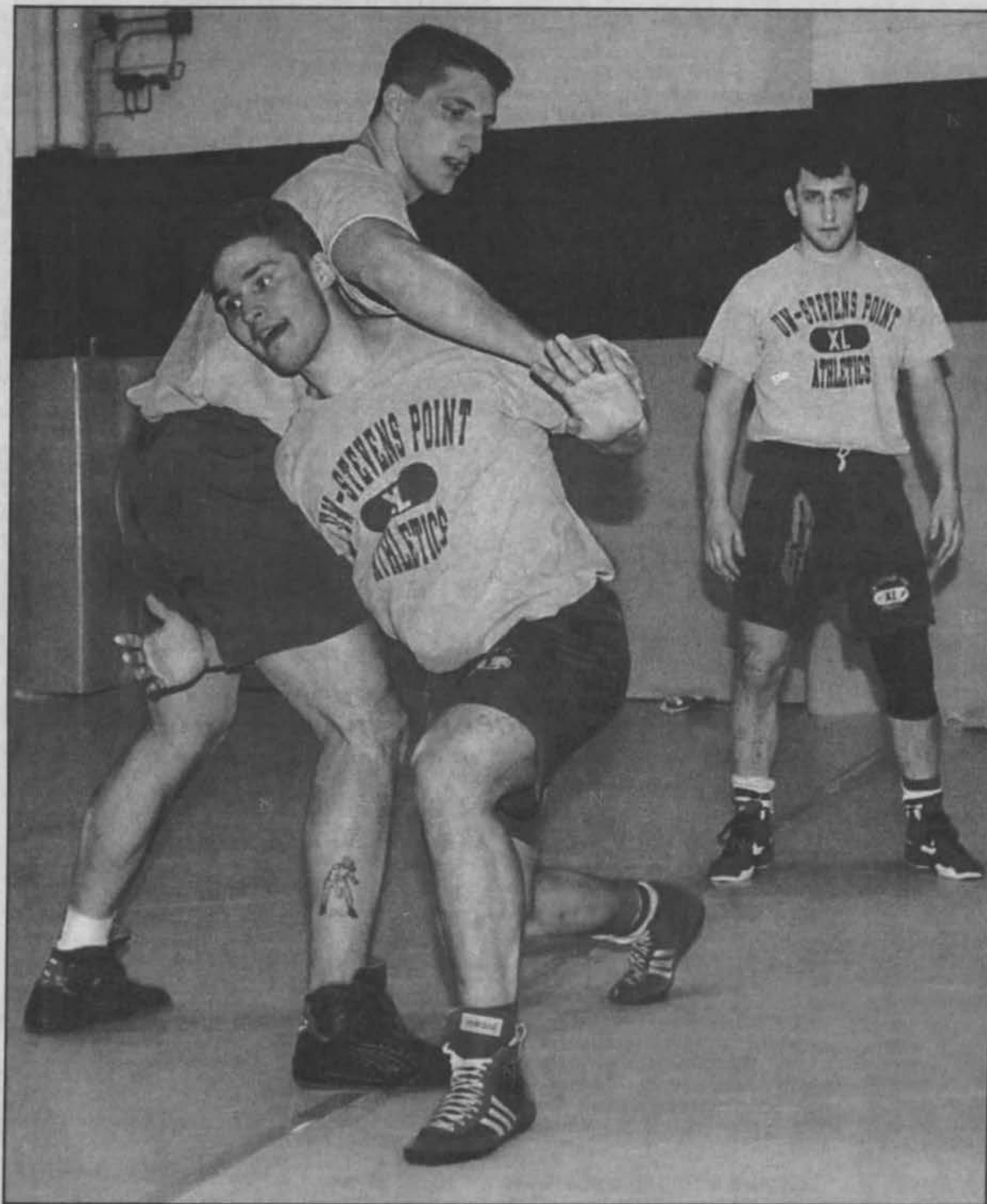
Carlson didn't make the varsity wrestling team at Osseo, Minn., a school with about 2,000 students, until his senior year when he posted a 28-7-1 record and qualified for the state tourney.

He also lettered two years as a 190-pound linebacker and helped Osseo win a conference championship his senior year.

"Dave is just a hard-working, dedicated athlete," Loy said. "He wasn't highly recruited coming out of high school but is a real student of the sport and spends a lot of time studying film."

"He's also solid in the classroom and has been a joy to coach. Dave is going to make a great coach some day because he's had to work so hard for everything he's achieved and realizes what it takes to succeed."

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MEN AT WORK: UW-Stevens Point's Colin Green (middle) tries out a move on teammate Travis Ebner as Dave Carlson looks on during a recent workout. The senior trio will try to conclude their stellar careers in style this weekend at the NCAA Division III National Meet at UW-SP. (Journal photo by Doug Wojcik)

Wrestlers

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Green, a crowd favorite because of his aggressive style, owns a 27-5 record at 177 pounds and is the school record holder in takedowns, both for a season (179) and career (559).

A Westby native, Green will also be making his third appearance in the national where he has posted a 4-3 record, including an eighth-place finish which gained him All-America status as a sophomore.

"I just have to wrestle up to my ability and take one match at a time," he said. "You can't let yourself get caught up in all the national tournament hype. I just have to worry about what I can control."

"I think we have a good chance to win it all. We're very close and have done the work, putting in thousands of hours in practice. We just have to go out there now and execute. If we all concentrate on our individual performances, it will lead to a strong team showing."

Green, a three-time WSUC champion, figures the toughest people in his weight class will be Frank Fields of Norwich, Conn., who edged him by two points in the National Duals and Mike Murtha of Ithaca, N.Y., who beat him 4-3 in the national tournament while going on to take third place a year ago.

Green's wrestling career also began at an early age, in the third grade. After two years of attending high school in his native Ishpeming, Mich., the family moved to Westby.

After finishing second in the Michigan state tourney as a sophomore, Green repeated the feat in his first year at Westby, then won a state title at 189 pounds as a senior, finishing with a 36-0 record. His career prep mark was 113-13.

Football brought similar recognition. He earned second-team all-state honors while playing guard and linebacker for Westby which lost in the WIAA Division 4 state championship game to Southern Door his senior year.

"I really enjoyed football, too, but relate a little more to wrestling," said Green, 22. "I'm an individual sport kind of guy. Maybe it's because I like to be more in control of my own destiny."

Green, who was married last summer, carries a 3.2 cumulative GPA with a double major in English and physical education, also is planning a teaching and coaching career.

"Colin was one of the most highly recruited wrestlers around coming out of high school," Loy recalled. "He's very talented and one of the biggest recruits I've had here."

"Despite his talent, he's been willing to take coaching and even change his style to become even more effective. Nobody has worked harder in the weight room than Colin. As a result, he's gotten stronger and more explosive."

"When Colin is out there, you know there is going to be a lot of action. He's broken the school takedown records because of his aggressiveness. His style also helps set the tone in matches and motivates other guys on the team."

Ebner has compiled a 2-5 record in three previous trips to the national and, with an impressive 30-3 mark, is determined to make this his breakthrough year.

"I'm really looking forward to it this year because it's at our place," he said. "We've been out East the last three years and those people were not very hospitable."

Ebner's 190-pound weight class, however, is loaded with three 1993 All-Americans.

The Pointer standout said the top contenders include Steve Farr of Ithaca, who beat him and went on to finish third at the national a year ago, and three-time All-American Jon Dawley of Wartburg, who edged him last year when Ebner's takedown at the buzzer was not allowed.

Ebner, who won WSUC titles his freshman season and this year, also likes the Pointers' chances of earning the team crown.

"You can't go by the number of qualifiers because some regions of the country are tougher than others," he said. "If everybody wrestles up to his potential, things could fall together for us."

Ebner, 21, who is in his 15th year of wrestling, posted an 86-24 record at Cameron High School and finished fifth and second in two trips to the state meet at Madison.

"I was ahead in the championship match 6-0 my senior year but lost 7-6 when I got called for four stalling points late in the match," Travis said, still wincing at the memory.

As a tight end and defensive end in football, Ebner earned all-conference honors twice. During his junior year, Cameron advanced to the sectional finals before losing to eventual Division 4 state champion Turtle Lake.

Although he graduated eighth in his class at Cameron, Ebner admits it has been a struggle to raise his cumulative GAP to its present 2.8.

"The first two years, I was majoring in wrestling," he said with a laugh. "But I've matured a lot in the last couple of years and put in a lot more time hitting the books."

Ebner has three semesters left to complete his degree in elementary education. He plans on eventually teaching at the elementary school level.

"Travis was a light 190 his first three years but has gained strength and stamina through his work in the weight room, to the point where he had to cut weight this season," Loy said.