

Syracuse wrestlers capture Easterns

By John Belluardo

PRINCETON, N.Y.—The Syracuse University wrestling team won the Eastern Intercollegiate Wrestling Association Championship here last night, placing all 10 of its wrestlers with finishes of fifth place or better.

SU scored a total of 159.75 points outdistancing Lehigh University's 134.5. Navy placed third with 99.75.

"We wrestled our hearts out today," said SU coach Ed Carlin, currently in his 19th season at the helm. "It's been a long time coming and we're glad to be back."

The Orangemen had not won the Easterns since 1965.

"We just came here to wrestle," said Mark Iacovelli, "and we couldn't have wrestled any better."

SU was led by senior co-captain Gene Mills, who became just the fourth wrestler in 77 years to win the Eastern Championship four times when he pinned Lehigh's Bob Weaver in 5:20. Mills, who pinned all his opponents, was named the tournament's outstanding wrestler in addition to receiving the Billy Sheridan Memorial Trophy for the most pins in least accumulated time.

Mills also won the John Fletcher Memorial Trophy for the greatest contribution to his team in the Easterns for four years.

Mills had quite a scare Thursday morning when he weighed in 20 pounds overweight. With just 20 seconds remaining in the official weigh-in period Friday afternoon, Mills stepped on the scale and he was two ounces under. At first, Mills thought he did not make it.

"I was ready to cry," he said. "I was very nervous. It could have been the end of my career."

But it was not, and before the weekend was over Mills had come within two of the NCAA record of 106 career pins.

"The record was the No. 1 thing on my mind," Mills said. "I wanted to win the Easterns, but I figured if I concentrated on pinning everyone, I'd win it anyway."

Mills was not the only Orange champion. The Catalfo brothers, Chris and Tim, as well as Mike Rotunda, also placed first.

"It feels great," Rotunda said of his first Eastern championship. "I'm so glad we won it. Especially after all we went through this year."

"I'm proud of everybody," Tim Catalfo said. "Everybody did well."

Catalfo, who performed inconsistently in dual meets this season, was a surprise champion for the Orangemen. He entered the tournament seeded seventh, but prevailed over Yale's Allen Washington in the final round, 10-4.

"The (regular season) records don't

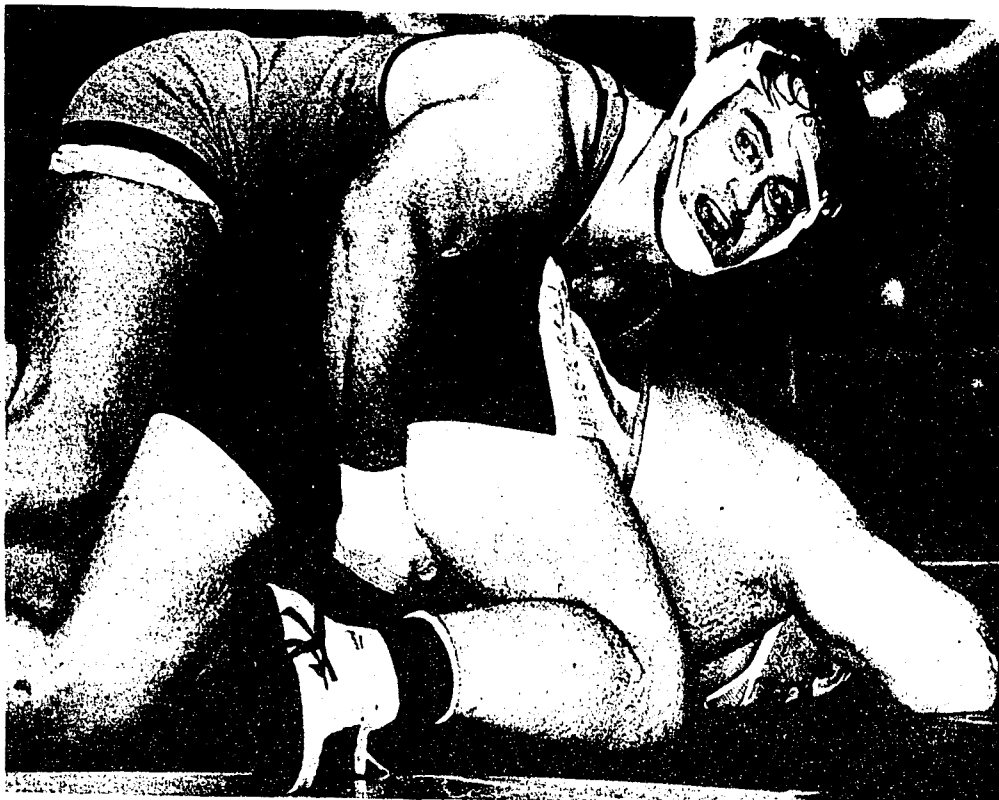


Photo by Harry DiOrto

Syracuse University wrestler Mike Rotunda (on top) defeats Lehigh University's Drew Kaiser in early round action in the Eastern Championships. Rotunda was one of four individual champions for SU as the team won the Easterns for the first time since 1965.

mean a damn thing now," Tim Catalfo said. "I'm a tournament wrestler. I can't get psyched for dual meets. I trained hard all week and took a lot of vitamins. When this thing started I just took one match at a time."

Mark Iacovelli and Gary Siegel battled back from semifinal losses to finish third and Kurt Honis did likewise, coming back from a quarterfinal loss.

Dale Mills and Joe Coolican finished fourth while John Dougherty placed fifth. Carlin said it was the first time all 10 of his wrestlers placed in the Easterns.

SU took the lead for good, early in the two-day tournament when they finished Saturday morning's preliminary rounds in front of the 16-team pack with 19.75 points. Lehigh was in second place with 15.25 and Navy rounded out the top three with 13.75.

All ten Orangemen won their preliminary bouts, seven by pins. The only Orangemen not to pin their op-

ponents were Dale Mills, who won by default, Rotunda, who won by disqualification and Tim Catalfo, who posted a 25-4 victory.

The going got a little tougher for the Orangemen in the quarterfinals in which they dropped three matches. Second-seeded Joe Coolican was upset by Army's Dave Hagg, 9-0. Dougherty was manhandled by Princeton's Henry Milligan, 20-10, and Honis lost a close match to Princeton's Jim Fraivillig, 7-6.

Seven Orange victories compensated for the three losses and at the conclusion of the quarterfinals the Orangemen remained in first place with 54.25 points. Lehigh and Navy held on to second and third place respectively. The only Orange pins in the quarterfinals were by Chris Catalfo and the Mills brothers. Catalfo and Gene Mills both scored their pins early. Dale Mills' pin of Navy's Doug Heinbach did not come until 1:34 in overtime.

The competition became fierce in the semifinals as Dale Mills and Iacovelli both lost to the eventual champions in their weight classes.

Dale Mills was beaten by Lehigh's Tom Husted, 11-10 and Iacovelli lost to Darryl Burley, also from Lehigh, 12-6.

The four Syracuse champions, as well as Honis, Iacovelli and Siegel will represent SU in the national championships March 12-14.

"They're the next step," Carlin said. "Realistically, I think we can finish at least sixth, but who knows. You never know what is going to happen."

Although all the Orangemen spoke of the upcoming nationals, last night all they wanted to do was savor their Eastern championship.

After receiving his first place tournament cup, Tim Catalfo said, "I can't wait to get back to my room with the three other champs and see how much beer this (the cup) holds."