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Four wrestlers qualify for National Championships

Team finishes second in conference; Turner, Seitel return to NCAAs for second time in careers

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Sports Writer

There comes a time when potential and previous hard work don't matter as much if you can't prove yourself. The Oswego State men's wrestling team may have felt that way going into Saturday's Empire Conference Tournament.

They had all the potential in the world and worked hard all season, but were plagued by injuries and other extraneous circumstances that prevented them from competing at the level they wanted to. There were no more excuses, though on Saturday as they had a full, healthy roster as they headed to Ithaca College.

All that hard work and potential finally paid off for the Lakers, as they finished second only to fourth-ranked Brockport in the tournament. Three Oswego State

wrestlers won their respective weight classes, earning them automatic berths to the NCAA Championships on March 2 and 3 at Wartburg College in Iowa, and a fourth earned a wild-card entry.

"The intensity and focus was absolutely tremendous on Saturday," said head coach Mike Howard, who was selected as the Empire Conference's Coach of the Year for the second time in 11 years. "We really stepped it up in the semi-final round and it paid off," said Howard.

Getting things going for the Lakers was senior All-American Jason Turner who earned another trip to nationals and a hope for a second consecutive All-American honor. Turner, with a record of 22-5, beat Ithaca's Jason Cesare 6-3 in the championship round.

"Turner is right in there and he

is in it for the whole thing," said Howard. Oswego State's heavy-weight has a legitimate shot at a national championship in his final season.

Turner won't be the only member of the team traveling to Nationals for the second time. Junior Noah Seitel will be joining him. Seitel, the team captain, was beaten in 1999 just before reaching the All-American round. Injury prevented him from coming back last year, so this return should be very rewarding for Seitel.

Freshman Frank Petrucci took the Empire Conference by storm on Saturday. He almost stole the show from his seasoned teammates as he won the 149 pound weight class and earned Co-Most Outstanding Wrestler of the tournament. It is the

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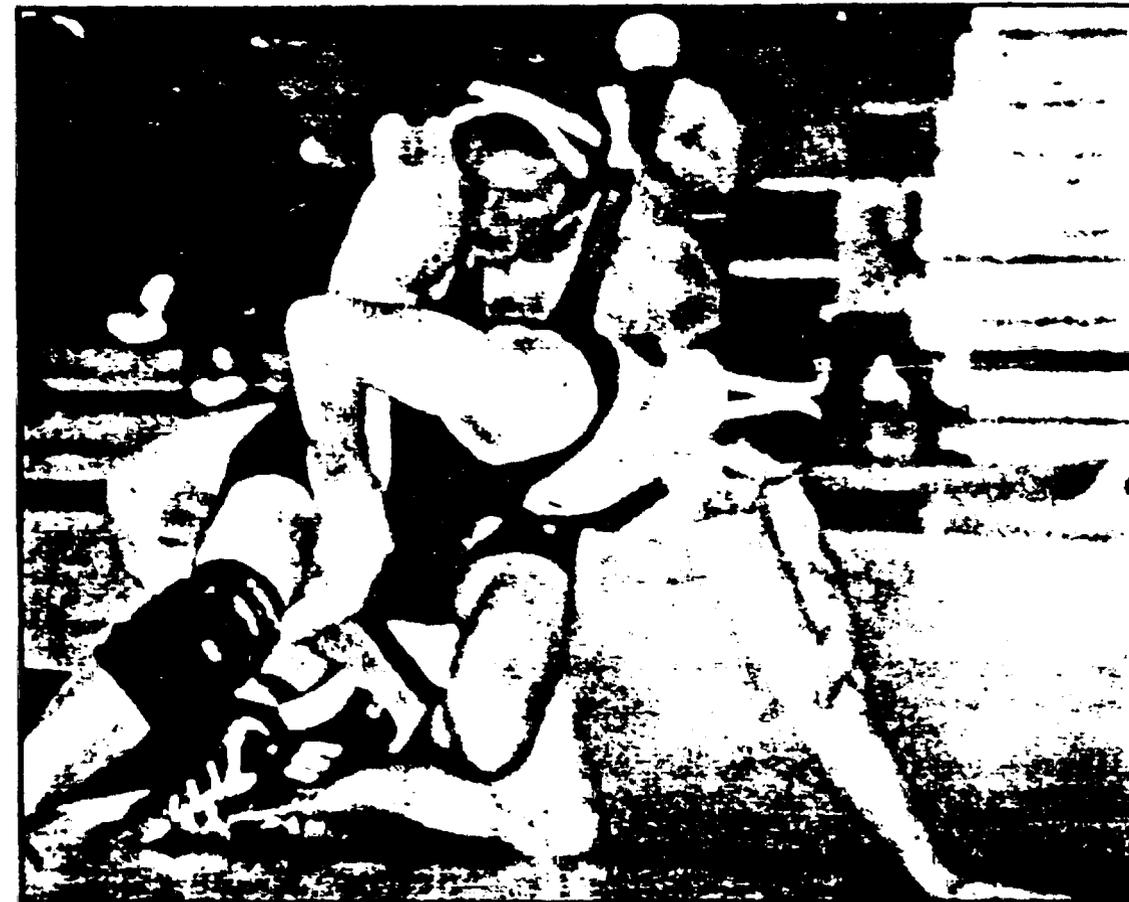


Photo courtesy of Sports Information

Junior wrestler Noah Seitel was one of four Lakers to earn a berth in the NCAA National Championships at Wartburg College in Waterloo, Iowa. Seitel was the 165 lb. conference champion.



Photo courtesy of Sports Information

Four Lakers have qualified for the NCAA Championships at Wartburg College in Waterloo, Iowa. Among the four is freshman Frank Petrucci (above, in action earlier this season against Ithaca College), who not only won the Empire Conference Championships, but he also shared honors as the tournament's Most Outstanding Wrestler.

Wrestlers headed to Nationals in Iowa

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 fifth time in nine years that an Oswego wrestler has taken home the honor. Petrucci has been excellent for the Lakers all season long as a freshman. He earned a trip to Nationals with his 6-4 overtime win over Brockport's Kris Harrington.

Also heading to nationals is junior Jeff Holmes, who took second in the 157 pound weight class. He earned one of five wild card bids that the Empire Conference was given this year. Junior Tom Mulchy also took second place. Mulchy lost 6-4 in a tough match with some controversial calls in the finals.

Freshman Leon Henry took third in the 141 pound class for the Lakers.

Sophomores Dan Dempsey and Ed Miller also wrestled well for Oswego taking fourth in their respective classes. "Ed Miller has to be our most improved wrestler from last year to this. He is wrestling two weight classes up and he did a great job for us," Howard said.

The sixteenth-ranked Lakers anxiously await the last rankings of the year in hopes that they may climb the ladder. We wish all of those competing in the NCAA's the best of luck in their quest for an All-American title.

Final ADIDAS/BRUTE Division

III National Coaches' Poll Top 16

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Augsburg Coll. (MN) | 9. Lycoming Coll. (PA) |
| 2. Montclair St. (NJ) | 10. Ithaca College |
| 3. U-Wisc. (La Crosse) | 11. Delaware Valley Coll. |
| 4. Wartburg Coll. (IA) | 12. Augustana Coll. (IL) |
| 5. Brockport | 13. Lawrence Univ. (WI) |
| 6. Loras College (IA) | 14. Upper Iowa Univ. |
| 7. Luther Coll. (IA) | 15. Buena Vista Univ. (IA) |
| 8. Coll. of NJ | 16. Oswego |