

SPORTS

2003 EMPIRE CONFERENCE



WRESTLING CHAMPIONSHIPS



Photo provided

Tenk Agyeman grapples with an opponent this season. Agyeman is 29-4 and is ranked fifth in the Division III Coaches Poll.

Oswego State's best wrestler takes aim at earning a spot in the Division III Wrestling Championships this weekend at the Empires

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Laid back, quiet and humble describe Tenk Agyeman's personality. On the mat Agyeman's alter ego comes out. An aggressive, dominating, determined athlete on the prowl.

With the Oswego State wrestling fans at Laker Hall chanting, "Tenk! Tenk!" Agyeman takes action and shows why he is currently ranked 5th in the Division III Coaches Poll at 133 pounds.

"Tenk's not one of those guys who gets pumped up," Oswego State Coach, Mike Howard said. "He goes about his business and does what he has to do."

The sophomore, elementary education major from Truman High School in the Bronx has compiled a 29-4 record on the season, including a first place finish at The Springfield College Invitational. Last year Agyeman finished 24-8. Agyeman attributes his improvements to taking time out to learn new techniques in the off season. Agyeman also strengthens his stamina by playing basketball and soccer.

Howard preaches an aggressive

style to his athletes.

Agyeman's quickness fits into Howard's methods perfectly.

"He's always going forward, always moving, looking to score points. He's also just a great overall athlete."

Agyeman expects to win and welcomes a challenge.

"The competition is better in wrestling than other sports," Agyeman said.

Agyeman first learned about wrestling in ninth grade when an elementary school friend brought him to a practice.

"My friend didn't stay but I got to like it," Agyeman said. Agyeman pushes himself, not looking for any shortcuts.

During a grueling two hours of practice the wrestlers pair off into groups, honing their skills while building their endurance. Agyeman uses all of his energy to make the most of his time. Sweat shines off his face. He uses his long, lanky legs to tie up his partner. Or he uses his

arms, which hang like branches, to suck in his teammate making sure that he holds a limb.

"He's tall for his weight class, as well as quick," Howard said. "His leverage and reach, play to his advantage. He can grab an opponent's ankle from three feet away."

Howard's praise accurately portrays Agyeman's style. However, Agyeman's indifferent attitude shows he just wants to go out and do something he loves.

"I'm nervous before a match," Agyeman said. "I just want to get out there. Once I'm on the mat I don't think."

Agyeman instinctively snatches his opponent's wrist. Controlling the flow of the match. If an opponent takes him down, Agyeman doesn't get discouraged. He gets back up and shoots. Not giving his opponent a chance to rest. A hawk clawing at his prey. Going for the kill.

Agyeman attempts to cap off

an amazing season with a birth to the NCAA Div. III Championships. To accomplish this goal he first must compete at the Empire Conference Championships, which is being held at Laker Hall's Max Ziel Gym on Saturday Feb. 22.

Brockport's Sophomore Dan Roberts could cut Agyeman's trip to the Nationals short. Roberts, ranked 4th in the nation at 133 pounds, defeated Agyeman earlier in the season by pinning the Laker in the second round. Agyeman remains confident despite the loss.

"I lost my focus," Agyeman said. "I could have beaten him. I respect him but he's just another wrestler."

If things go as planned the two could meet in the finals on Saturday, with a birth to the Nationals on the line. Agyeman has been hot of late. Recently he chalked up victories against opponents from Montclair State and the College of New Jersey. His last loss came against Roberts, which was nearly a month ago.

Agyeman's passiveness gives hope to any introvert with a passion for competition. On the mat Agyeman's reserved and tranquil nature disappears. His thirst for victory takes over and it creates a collegiate athlete worth watching.

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However, 18 individuals in all qualify for the Nationals. Eight wild cards are up for grabs. This provides hope for those who fall just short of the gold. The wild cards are voted on by the Ranking Committee, which includes Oswego State's Coach, Mike Howard.

Entering the tournament Brockport is the hands down favorite to take first place. They are ranked 3rd in the Division III Coaches Poll. Brockport astonishingly has eight individual wrestlers ranked in the top five of their weight class in the Coaches Poll. Lenny Baker ranks 1st at 149 pounds. Baker is the only No. 1 ranked wrestler competing at the Empire Championships. The senior posts a 14-2 record on the season, with a career mark of 82-22.

"Brockport has a large contingent of seniors," Howard said. "They have guys who have been in the program for four, five, even six years."

Oswego on the other hand has one lone senior:

Captain Ed Miller, who wrestles at 174 pounds. Oswego's young corps heads in with an optimistic attitude.

"If we start to get and get on a roll, who knows what could happen?" Howard said. "Momentum plays a big factor in tournaments. A fortunate victory early in the day builds confidence, which plays a big factor later on."

Oswego's best chance lies with sophomore Tenk Agyeman, ranked 5th in the nation at 133 pounds. Brockport's Dan Roberts, who defeated Agyeman earlier in the season, stands in Agyeman's way.

Other Laker wrestlers such as sophomore Chris DeMichiel at 157, sophomore Jeremy Calkins at 285 and freshman Brian Millich at 197 will have to deal with Brockport's dominance. Brockport defeated Oswego 39-3 back on Jan. 22.

"Brockport has guys who know the system and know what it takes to win at this level," Howard said. "Brockport has a good tradition of wrestling. They condition year round. It's important there."

Ithaca stands at #14 in the coaches' poll. The bombers defeated Oswego 25-10 back on Dec. 11.

"Ithaca did a good job of tying up our wrists and adding on the points in the third period," Howard said. Cortland comes in ranked 15th in the Coaches' Poll. They defeated Oswego State 24-16 on Jan. 29.

Oneonta enters the tournament ranked 27th in the Coaches' Poll. The Red Dragons defeated Oswego 26-18 back on Feb. 1.

"Oneonta has turned their program around over the past couple of years," Howard said. "However, they still are not at the same level as Brockport and Ithaca."

The Winn brothers lead Oneonta, Greg at 125 pounds and Dustin at 149 pounds.

Rounding out the list is RIT. The Tigers beat Oswego State 20-19 back on Nov. 13. Senior Pat North currently ranks 3rd at 165 pounds.

Wrestlers work for months in preparation for Saturday. Their ambition will result in either pure jubilation or bitter frustration. An end to their season or one more shot at glory.

Players to Watch

■ A look at who to watch and who they play for at this weekend's Empire Conference Wrestling Championships:

BROCKPORT



Coach: Don Murray

- 125 Salvador Cruz
- 133 Dan Roberts
- 141 Danny Song
- 149 Lenny Baker
- 157 Andrew Boice
- 165 Mario Schiano
- 174 Rich D'Amico
- 184 Nicholas Vieni
- 197 Brian Tatar
- 285 Jim Pennise

CORTLAND



Coach: Brad Bruhn

- 125 Mike Hartle
- 133 Chris Arnold
- 141 Jeff Bly
- 149 Ben Hamm
- 157 Mike Cox
- 165 Josh Brant
- 174 Tony Cohen
- 184 Jake Armstrong
- 197 Sean Finnegan
- 285 Joe Congero

ITHACA



Coach: Marty Nichols

- 125 Marcario Alvarez
- 133 Scott Aronowitz
- 141 Rich White
- 149 Marc Israel
- 157KC Beach
- 165 Bill Parry
- 174 Robert Stubbs
- 184 Jeff Edelstein
- 197 Bryan Petti
- 285 Eric Wisecup

ONEONTA



Coach: Al Sosa

- 125 Greg Winn
- 133 Sean Murphy
- 141 Andy Tobias
- 149 Dustin Winn
- 157 Kyle Hauptfleisch
- 174 Ryan Lynch
- 184 Dave Carroll
- 197 Billy Cooper
- 285 Julio Santiago

RIT



Coach: Scott Stever

- 125 Amir Figueroa
- 133 Mike Cicio
- 141 Steve Vaughn
- 149 David Bisers
- 157 Tom Schwartling
- 165 Pat North
- 174 Sean Dust
- 184 Zach Greenberg
- 197 Luke Walsh
- 285 Luke Zajac

OSWEGO ST.



Coach: Mike Howard

- 125 Toribio Garcia
- 133 Tenkoran Agyeman
- 141 Brian Egger
- 149 Brian Bowen
- 157 Matt Champion
- 165 Leonard Lee
- 174 Ed Miller
- 184 Gino Giannettino
- 197 Brian Millich
- 285 Jeremy Calkins