

Wrestling:

# NCCC Wrestlers Complete Sensational Season

by Jennifer Kinyon

The NCCC Wrestling team had three goals this season. First was to be ranked as one of the top ten in the conference; second was to send all 10 members of the team to the Regionals; and third was to be ranked within the top 10 at the national level. Led by Head Coach Eric Knuutila, all three goals were almost achieved. The team was ranked as high as eighth during the season and ended up ranked tenth in their conference. Nine out of the 10 wrestlers went to the regionals, and the team was also ranked tenth in the nation.

"I feel we had a great season as a team and individually, all of the hard work paid off," commented Sophomore Captain Brad Rowe.

Just one prime example of how well the team did is their results from the 1999 National Junior

College Athletic Association (NJCAA) Region III Tournament. The tournament was hosted by Alfred State but dominated by NCCC. In 10 different weight classes, NCCC took seven firstplace and two second-place wins. The team as a whole walked away with first-place tallying a score of 115.

Alfred State, who placed second, had a score that was 52.5 points lower than the Trailblazers. Besides the recognition the wrestlers received, Coach Knuutila received some of his own, he was named as Coach of the Year.

To state the obvious, the wrestlers were unstoppable. To prove that even further three wrestlers earned All-American status. This acknowledgment was achieved at the NJCAA National Wrestling Championship held at the Rochester Community College, Rochester, Minnesota. To achieve All-American status, wrestlers were required to place in the top eight of their weight class. The three members named as All-Americans were sophomore, Jeff Mye (125 lbs); sophomore Captain Brad Rowe (141 lbs); and freshman Rashad Evans (165 lbs). According to Coach Knuutila, two other wrestlers, Dan Williams and Keith Jones, should have earned this honor as well.

Jeff Mye, started out 1-1 for the first day of competition. He won in an 8-3 decision the first round but was pinned in the quarter finals. On day two in round one of wrestlebacks, he won in a 3-1 decision. In the quarterfinals, he won again, in a 2-1 decision. He lost in a 4-3 decision for the consolation semi-finals and went on to battle for fifth and sixth place in the consolation finals. He was defeated 4-2 and finished off in sixth place in

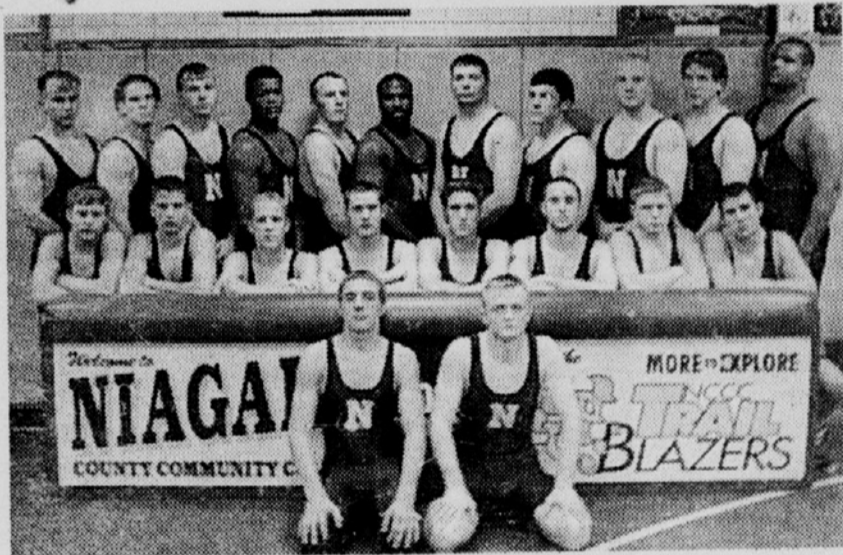
the 125 lb weight class, and achieved his All-American status. According to Coach Knuutila, Jeff deserves All-American status. He put a great deal of hard work into this season. He would run everyday, outside of the running he did in practice.

"All of the hard work the team put into the season was well worth it. The team itself placed tenth, which was the highest ever and the team deserved all the publicity they received," stated sophomore Jeff Mye.

Brad Rowe began his success of the tournament right away. He finished off day one of competition 2-0. He won round one 8-6, and pinned his opponent in 1:37 minutes for the win in the quarterfinals. On the second day of competition Rowe lost in the semi-finals 7-3. He then moved onto

the semi-final wrestleback competition. He defeated his opponent in a 5-1 decision. In the consolation finals, for third and fourth place, he lost a 6-4 decision placing the All-American fourth in the 141 lb weight class.

Coach Knuutila commented, "Brad should have been an All-American last year which makes me even more



Row 1 (L-R): Captain Issac Everett, Co-Captain Brad Rowe  
 Row 2: Mike Brown, Jason Carson Jeff Mye, Chris Blazek, Joe Yoder, Jason Arsenault, John Gerhardt, Pete Mazzeo  
 Row 3: Keith Jones, Jason Lainberger, Dan Williams, Rashad Evans, Cam Winfrey, Ron Blunt, Jerry, Fairbank, Steve Gavin, Steve Pankow, Seth Rak, and Keith Bell  
 Missing from Photo Brain Austin, Randy Isbell

pleased he became one this year,"

In the first day of competition Rashad Evans was 1-1 for the day. In the first round of action he pinned his opponent in 4:33 minutes for the win. In the quarterfinals, Evans suffered a close loss in 4-3 decision. Evans went on to day two achieving the most success. He won three matches in a row and lost only one. He won in a 5-4 decision for round one of wrestlebacks, defeated his opponent 5-4 again in the quarterfinals and walked all over his opponent in the semi-finals 12-4. He suffered his only loss for the day in the consolation finals, giving him fourth in 165 lb weight class.

"Rashad has the most talent of anyone. He didn't wrestle up to his ability and still placed fourth and earned All-American status," Coach Knuutila commented. Coach went on to say that Rashad had the most wins this season for the team with 33 wins.

At the end of the National Tournament, NCCC finished tenth out of 46 teams, with 35.5 points. Before going to the tournament, it was obvious to the team and coaches who would be All-Americans. Of course, the coaches wanted more for their team, but achieving All-American status and having all the success the team had this season was most important.