

Niagara Frontier League Wrestling Roundup

Tonawanda, N-W Falcons are favored

By ED SLOWINSKI
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HIGH SCHOOL WRESTLING has become as much to the local winter scene as the snowfall in the last few years. One of the oldest and most competitive leagues, the Niagara Frontier League, swings into action once again on Monday when Lockport takes on Niagara Falls in the Power City to open the 1975-76 season.

Word around the league says that last year's co-champions, Niagara-Wheatfield and Tonawanda, should be battling it out for the top spot once again. In 1974-75 N-W and Tonawanda each had 16-0 records, but didn't meet during the regular season because they drew a bye in the scheduling. They did meet in the NFL meet where the Falcons came out victorious and in the Section VI Division III wrestle-offs, where the Warriors took the title.

If this year's Tonawanda-Niagara-Wheatfield battle is like anything in the past, local wrestling fans will be in for quite a treat.

If the Warriors or the Falcons are to falter, any of five teams could make a bid to become the new ruler of the NFL.

KENMORE EAST IS BACK as they only lost four seniors. On the other side of Kenmore, West will also field a strong club. The balance at East and West makes things very interesting in Kenmore. Both teams are looked upon very strongly in the pre-season ratings.

Lewiston-Porter has 80 boys out for its team and should be in the thick of the title race. They have eight starters back and are looking to improve last year's 7-9 showing.

The Lumberjacks of North Tonawanda were hit pretty hard by graduation and are in a rebuilding year.

Lockport has a lot more material than it has had in the past. They surprised some clubs last year and are capable of doing the same this season. At LaSalle Richard Meckes is just getting his program on the road in his second season there. The power of his team is questionable at this time. The same holds true at Niagara Falls where Nick DePadre, the new Powercat coach, takes over a team that finished 0-16 a year ago.

NIAGARA-WHEATFIELD Coach Dennis Matteson said that his team will be basically new when the season opens. The Falcons added a few more awards to their fine wrestling credentials last year as they were co-champions, winners of the league meet, and runner-up in the Section VI Division III wrestle-offs. A few boys will be back from that award winning team but many of them were lost to graduation.

N-W has only five lettermen returning, but has a few boys with experience who didn't wrestle enough to letter a year ago.

The Falcons should be a well-rounded team, but appear extremely solid in the middle weight classes. Other than the strength in the middle, Matteson doesn't foresee any other outstanding areas.

IF THE DEFENDING co-champions are weak, it is in the lack of experience in some weight classes. However, as the season goes on, this problem should be ironed out.

Returning from last year's team are John DeLorenzo, Mike Martino, Jim Heuer, Pat Pittman, Steve Magyar and Bill Caterisano.

TONAWANDA: Glenn Bateman will have his hands full trying to fill the shoes left by the untimely death of George Miller. The Warriors were co-champions a year ago with a 16-0 record. They



Tonawanda Coach Glenn Bateman

... Checks on cousins Guy Miller (top) and Rock Miller. (Photo by Dave Ballard)



N-W Coach Denny Matteson (top center)

... With Pat Pittman (front) and Tim Mowrey, Jim Heuer. (Photo by Dave Ballard)

were also Section VI Division III champions as well as runner-up in the league meet.

However, Bateman is very optimistic in his rookie year as head coach.

Like Niagara-Wheatfield, the Warriors also appear strong in the middle weights. But, as in the past, the Warriors are very inexperienced in the upper weights. Among the lighter weights the Warriors are young, but ready to go.

Bateman brings good wrestling credentials to Tonawanda. He was an assistant coach at Williamsville North High School for two years before getting the job at THS. In 1967 he was a state champion in the 167 pound class for Maryvale High School.

The Warriors have strong performers back in Jeff Toth, Guy Miller, Dan Doll, Nick Simon, Mike Hartel and Chris Bronson.

KENMORE EAST: Coach Skip Pine "looks for it to be a good season." He has 15 lettermen returning from a year ago when the Bulldogs finished 10-6.

In the lighter weight classes Pine has all returning varsity people to work with. They are all very experienced, but still very young. In the weight classes from 91 to 145, Pine has only two seniors in the line-up.

Greg Kerr returns to anchor the Bulldogs in the heavy weights.

If East appears weak, it could be in depth among the upper weights. As compared to the lower weights where East has at least six wrestlers to a class, the upper weights have only two or three boys to compete with.

"I have a lot of good boys, but I'm not sure who will be where yet," Pine added.

Among Pine's "good boys" are Kerr, Dan Soloway and Scott Pine.

KENMORE WEST: The Blue Devils came on strong after a slow start last year and finished 9-7 on the season for mentor Bob Jackson. He has eight wrestlers back and looks to a good junior varsity team from a year ago to stock the rest of his weight classes.

The secret of West's success this year will lay

with its tri-captains Angelo Arcadipane, Pat Mang and Mike Giessert. All played big roles in the Blue Devils' fine season last year and are expected to do the same again this year.

"It's tough to look at your weaknesses until you're really on the mat," Jackson commented, "but we're experienced in all weight classes," he continued.

Tom Novo, Steve Sugarman, Paul Genco and John Spoth are also back and expected to have fine years.

LEWISTON-PORTER: The Lancers appear very young, but they do have eight starters back from a year ago and hope to better last season's 7-9 slate.

Coach Pete Rao lost many of his upper weights to graduation and this category is a weak link in the Lancers' attack. Rao said, "we're hoping for the upper weights to prove themselves as the season goes on."

Low-Port only has five seniors on the team, but the underclassmen have valuable experience.

The lighter weights will be tough for the Lancers as Mike Glavin, Paul Castiglione and Doug Adamson are all back from last year.

Also expected to have a fine season for Rao are Doug Leaderhouse, Dave Emory and Tom Blinco. However, Blinco won't be suited up until after the first couple of meets due to a football injury.

NORTH TONAWANDA: After a 10-6 season last winter, coach Gary Kumm is in the process of rebuilding the Lumberjacks. "We have pretty much a new team, but we have no depth," the sophomore coach stated.

Even though the 'Jacks are basically a new team, they do have some big guns left from last year's club. Paul Bartlett, who came on toward the end of last season, is back for another campaign in the heavy weight division. Also back are light weights Dan DiFrancesco and Clay Larson.

Despite this being a rebuilding year for Kumm, he is blessed with a lot of tough kids from the North Tonawanda sophomore class. They might not be big winners this year, but are a bright light in the future for NT.

The 'Jacks should be tougher as the year goes on. They have a lot of raw potential that just has to be developed.

LOCKPORT: As usual the lighter weights will be the big advantage for Ken Pettapiece's Lockport Lions. The Lions have more material this year than they did a year ago when they ended up 7-9.

Lockport will be put to the test early as it faces Kenmore East and Tonawanda in two of its first three matches.

The Lions also have depth problems, but look to George Reed, Dave King, Dan Gately and Art Galvis to be consistent point scorers throughout the year. Lockport's fine quarterback in football, Scott Lewendowski, is out for the team for the first time as a senior and looks impressive in the early going.

LaSALLE: In his first year at LaDalle, Coach Meckes finished with a 5-11 record. This year Meckes' program is gaining momentum and his Explorers could be the "sleeper" of the circuit.

LaSalle is building its team around the upper weights which includes three divisional champs back from a year ago. Rich Fair (215), Duane Hunt (177), and Jim Winkfield (heavyweight) are all seniors this year and are hoping to repeat on



Ken-East's 'Skip' Pine chalk-talks

... For Bill Schukraft (front) and Scott Pine, Ken Cramer, Greg Kerr (Photo by Bill Wippert)



North Tonawanda's Gary Kumm (center)

... Demonstrates for Tracy Bloese, left, and Paul Bartlett. (Photo by Dave Ballard)



Ken-West Coach Robert Jackson

... With matmen Pat Mang, Mike Giessert, Angelo Arcadipane. (Photo by Bill Wippert)

their accomplishments that they gained as juniors.

Meckes is also counting on help from Ike Smith, Chris Mitchell and Brian Hamner.

NIAGARA FALLS: Former Niagara-Wheatfield wrestler Nick DePadre has his hands full as he gets his first coaching assignment at Niagara Falls. DePadre inherits a team that finished without a win from a year ago and is also low in the number of boys out.

"Well it's discouraging, but the kids who are out are working very hard and they want to work," DePadre noted. This will be mainly a year for DePadre to get his coaching system into effect. He has a lot of ninth and tenth graders to work with an hopes to bring them up for the future.

DePadre is no stranger to wrestling. He wrestled in the Niagara Frontier League at Niagara-Wheatfield for four years. In two of those years he was a state finalist. His assistant, John Bradt, also wrestled for N-W for four years and was a state finalist for three years. After his high school career, DePadre wrestled at the University of South Dakota.

Peter Penbleton and Larry Coney should be fine performers for the Falls.

SPORTS

Trott withdraws from mat loop

The Niagara Frontier League's wrestling program is down to nine teams this year as Trott Vocational High School announced it was dropping from the league.

The Engineers finished 0-16 a year ago and officials from the school blamed non-support for the team as the main reason why they dropped the program.

Trott was practicing without a head coach as Joe Meck watched over the team as an assistant but didn't want the head coaching position. He was unavailable for comment.

However, Meck didn't have the boys to work with in the first place. Only six to nine boys have drilled regularly with the team, for both the varsity and junior varsity.

Finally, Trott High principal Steve Polniak made an announcement that if more boys didn't come out for the team, the program would be dropped. The day of the announcement there were 23 boys out for the team. That was a Friday afternoon and there was hope that the program would be saved. However, at the next scheduled practice, a Monday, the same six to nine boys, were the only ones who participated.

Something had to be done and Robert Green, the Niagara Falls school system's director of health and physical education, looked into the matter. He told The NEWS that the only thing left to do was to drop the program. He approached Dr. Charles Long, the deputy superintendent of the school system, and both agreed to drop the program.

What happens to the six to nine boys that were out for the team? Well, Green asked the league officials if the boys could be allowed to wrestle for Niagara Falls or LaSalle High Schools, depending upon which district the boys lived in. That measure was approved by the league earlier this week.

Mat clinic is slated

Tonawanda High School will hold a pre-season kickoff to the Niagara Frontier League wrestle season Monday night at 7 p.m. in the Red Warrior gymnasium. The event will feature the Red Warrior wrestling team and will include a wrestling clinic.

Tonawanda's new varsity wrestling coach Glenn Bateman will be on hand to greet the public. The event is sponsored by the George Miller Memorial Wrestling Booster Club and is open to all interested parents and students.

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