

Wrestling

Bulls look sharper this year

Last year Buffalo's wrestling team spent a weekend in California, Pennsylvania for a match with California State. In that rural part of the state just south of Pittsburgh, there was nothing better to do than talk wrestling on the bus ride from the motel to the school. In one such conversation, Buffalo 142-pounder Doug Stuart said: "The New York State champ is the most sought after wrestler in the country."

Last week Stuart's words seemed prophetic, as he was beaten out of his starting position by freshman Bruce Hadsell from Canandaigua. Hadsell was one of last year's New York State high school state champions.

Hadsell represents a new breed of recruit for Ed Michael's wrestling Bulls — the blue chipper. Several of this year's recruits come with finer credentials than the Bulls have seen before.

In recent years, Michael has done a fine job recruiting junior college transfers, many from Corning Community College where he formerly coached. As a result, the Bulls compiled a composite record of 31-3-1 over the last two years and finished in the top 20 nationally both times. Both of these squads had very few wrestlers that were well known before they arrived in Buffalo.

Now the Corning wrestlers are gone and Michael's recruiting seems to be headed more toward top level freshmen than the junior college transfers. In addition to Hadsell, the Bulls have added state champion Ron Langdon, a 118-pounder and heavyweight Frank Borelli, a New York State runner-up.

Young heads newcomers

The best of the new group is a junior college transfer from New Jersey, Jim Young, a 134-pounder from Middlesex Community College. Young starts wrestling for the Bulls after a record-breaking campaign for the Bulls soccer squad. Michael indicated that Young, possibly the best all-around athlete presently on campus, "could be the best wrestler we've ever had." At Middlesex, he was twice a national junior college runner-up.

Along with the 134-lb. position, some of the more prominent holes left by the graduation of five starters will be filled by grapplers either ineligible or injured last season. This year's edition of the Bulls is not as balanced nor as deep as last year's squad. It will be difficult, but not impossible, for Buffalo to equal last year's achievements. The team has undergone such vast changes that any prediction would be risky. The Bulls look to be stronger than ever in the lower weights, equally good in last year's strength, the upper weight classes, with some trouble spots in the middle weights.

Sams sparkled at tournament

A year ago, Mack Sams (118 lbs.) had an up-and-down season before excelling in the NCAA Eastern Regional Tournament. At the time Sams felt the tournament was his best performance since a knee operation the year before. He appears ready to take over where he left off at the tournament.

Sandwiched between Sams and Young, is Young's ex-teammate from Middlesex, Bill Jacoutot. Improvement for Jacoutot would be a tall order after last year's 13-3 dual meet record, which included two losses at a higher weight. After a shaky start, Jacoutot was Buffalo's best wrestler during the second half of last season. This year he will start at his proper weight class (126) and should not have that early season trouble.

Top weights strong

The three highest weight classes are loaded with national place-winning potential. Last year's starter at 177, Ed Hamilton, returns. Hamilton's 1972-73 record of 12 wins and two losses included an amazing 10 pins. One of his two losses came in a close match with national champion Bill Simpson

from Clarion State. Hamilton has been nicknamed both "Crazy Ed" and "The Scrambler" for his unorthodox style on and off the mat. He often forsakes the finer points of wrestling, literally gives away points, and risks getting pinned himself, in order to pin his opponent. Ed's pattern is to start slowly and then explode, using his own special series of moves, which involves dragging the opponent back over his (Hamilton's) own body. The results are always exciting, usually resulting in a pin victory for Hamilton.

Charlie Wright takes over at 190 lbs. following a year of ineligibility after transferring from New York Maritime. Wright, like Hamilton, has few fears on the mat and likes to use the brute strength that helped him as a heavyweight in open tournaments last year. At 190, there is no telling how far he can go.

Russi could go far

Similarly, the sky is the limit for Mammoth heavyweight Pat Russi, who is 6'2" and 270 pounds. Now that Olympian Chris Taylor has graduated, the national heavyweight picture is wide open. Russi, a former runner-up in the Junior World Championships, is as well qualified as anyone to fill the position if he stays healthy. In the past, Pat has been plagued with knee and foot injuries. Russi is progressing on schedule and should be ready for the first dual meet with Geneseo on November 28.

The Bulls can expect to have some difficulty particularly with the tougher teams in the weights between 142 and 167. The 158-weight class should be strong as soon as Jerry Nowakowski is able to return. Nowakowski was one of Buffalo's steadiest performers last year, but is saddled with a shoulder injury as of this writing. Freshman Paul Granditz will fill in until Jerry has recuperated.

Stuart, Hadsell to split

Both Stuart and Hadsell should see action at 142. A composite of the two would be perfect. Last year, Stuart got some valuable major college experience. Hadsell has great natural ability, but due to Buffalo's tough competition, any freshman could expect a tough start.

Wally Davis (150 lbs.) had to sit out last season after transferring from Navy. This year he is sitting again for a while after badly bruising his shoulder in the first week of practice. According to Michael, he is not progressing very rapidly.

Davis' injury leaves the 150-pound chores to senior Mitch Draina. Draina has the necessary strength, but suffered from a lack of wrestling savvy last year. Hopefully, he has picked up some experience and will be more skillful this season.

After the graduation of co-captain Eric Knuutila, the 167-pound slot falls to junior Jim Lamb and sophomore Eric Drasgow. Right now, Lamb has the nod. Jim has shown a lot of ability during practice, but has not been able to utilize it in dual meets. Drasgow has the opposite problem, particularly manifested in last year's Clarion State match where his surprise pin victory was a crucial factor in Buffalo's triumph.

Best schedule ever

The 1973-74 schedule is the most ambitious ever for the Bulls, with few great teams (Navy has been dropped from last year) but many good ones. Clarion State and Cleveland State (one of last year's two losses for the Bulls) appear to be the best of the group. However, Brockport, Maryland, Princeton, Bloomsburg State, Ashland and Cincinnati could beat Buffalo on any given day. The schedule lists 26 dual meet opponents, including one triangular meet, two quadrangular meets and a wild septagonal seven-team two-day affair to be hosted by the Army in December. The prestigious Midlands Open Tournament has also been added during the semester break.

Team rivalries make for great excitement

by Bruce Engel
Contributing Editor

Traditional rivalries are an exciting and essential part of collegiate sports. Right now, Buffalo wrestling fans may be seeing the start of what can turn into two great rivalries in future years.

This year the wrestling Bulls will travel to Clarion State. The match will be the third in an eventful series, each team recording a previous win.

Two years ago, Buffalo was undefeated late until the team traveled to West Point for a quadrangular meet with Maryland and Clarion State, a small college power the Bulls had never wrestled. The Bulls surprised Army and Maryland and no doubt were confident that they could do no wrong in the match with Clarion State. Meanwhile Clarion had been upset by Army, and the Flashes were out for blood. Led by pin victories over two previously undefeated Buffalo wrestlers, Clarion State topped the Bulls 23-14. It was Buffalo's only loss of the season.

Bulls return favors

Last January, the Flashes came to Buffalo, sporting national champion Wade Schalles and an undefeated streak of their own. The Bulls were more than ready for them, and went ahead, stayed ahead, and finally clinched the meet (18-15) with a pin by freshman Eric Drasgow in the 177 pound match. It was Clarion's

only loss of the season. Two other Clarion wrestlers joined Schalles in the national winners circle last March. "Buffalo outwrestled us tonight," Clarion Coach Bob Bubb said after that meet. "But next year they will come to our place and we'll see what happens there."

The Bulls have wrestled Brockport every year since the 1965-66 season. Only one match was not close, and there have been two ties. The series stands at 4-2-1 in favor of the Bulls with Brockport not winning since 1968, despite the fact that both teams have risen in national prominence in recent years. With personnel like Larry Goodfellow, John Ferrara and Bill Ciccarelli, the Eagles should be tough again.

Eagles fired up

When the Bulls were in Brockport last year it was obvious that the Eagles badly wanted to win. The students packed the gym and held up signs saying "We're number one," displaying a wish to replace Buffalo as the top ranked team in New York. The fact that both schools are in the SUNY system, are geographically close to each other and battle each other in recruiting tends to add kindling to the flame.

Coach Ed Michael approves of developing these rivalries. "The boys get up for these matches and the fans like it," said Michael. "The athletes feed off the fans and the fans feed off the athletes."



—Pitter