

SPORTS

Salamanca wrestlers back and ready to go!

To compete in sports is to strive and improve, and so it is with this year's Salamanca High varsity wrestling team.

Last year, Salamanca won its league championship, sent a good contingent to the Section VI Qualifier and sent still another wrestler—heavyweight Jess Wilson—to the New York State High School Wrestling Championships in Syracuse.

Jess is back after a spectacular 41-2 season (including a sixth-place in the states) as are five others who won at least 20 matches and three others who totaled 53 wins.

So what can they do for an encore?

The squad will begin to answer that question Wednesday at Fredonia and Friday at Gowanda before opening at home Tuesday with Maple Grove.

"We again want to win our league championship," said sixth-year coach Rich Morton, "and qualify a lot for the Section VI meet and the state meet. We also want to be ranked in New York State which would be the first Salamanca wrestling team to do so."

The solid nucleus of nine returners seemingly would put the Warrior matmen well on their way to those goals, based on experience alone, but there is a hitch.

"A couple of veteran kids decided not to come out this year," said Morton, "so we know it is going to be a tougher road for us but we have accepted the challenge."

"Our attitude is very positive this season," he added, "and we have set our individual and team goals. It takes a very-well disciplined kid to become a champion in wrestling and every one on this team has shown that they are willing to work and work hard."

A stellar example of that, especially this season, is junior Jim Quinn.

Quinn wrestled at 155 pounds last year and ran up a 21-12 record, putting him among the best on the team.

"Jim is 6-4 and weighs about 185-190 pounds this year," said Morton, "but he can't beat out Joe Bierfeldt or the Wilsons so there is no place for him. Since he is so tall, we are thinking of possibly moving him up to unlimited this year."

"But here is a kid," he went on, "who was a starter last year, was an important member of the team and won over 20 matches and he has no spot so he will have to wrestle on the junior varsity this year. He did not say to himself that there is no sense coming out this year but is working as hard as any of the rest and really wants to be part of the team."

"I am happy to have a kid like Quinn," he added, "because that is what coaching is all about—having somebody like him to want to strive and work and achieve a goal."

Goals, both individual and team, are what Morton has each wrestler write out at the beginning of the season, for wrestling is an individual working alone in a team sport.

"Probably 75 percent of a match is mental," he said. "A lot of times, wrestlers enter a match even in technique and ability and when you get to that third period, those last two minutes are the toughest and it is the champions who bear down and do their best."

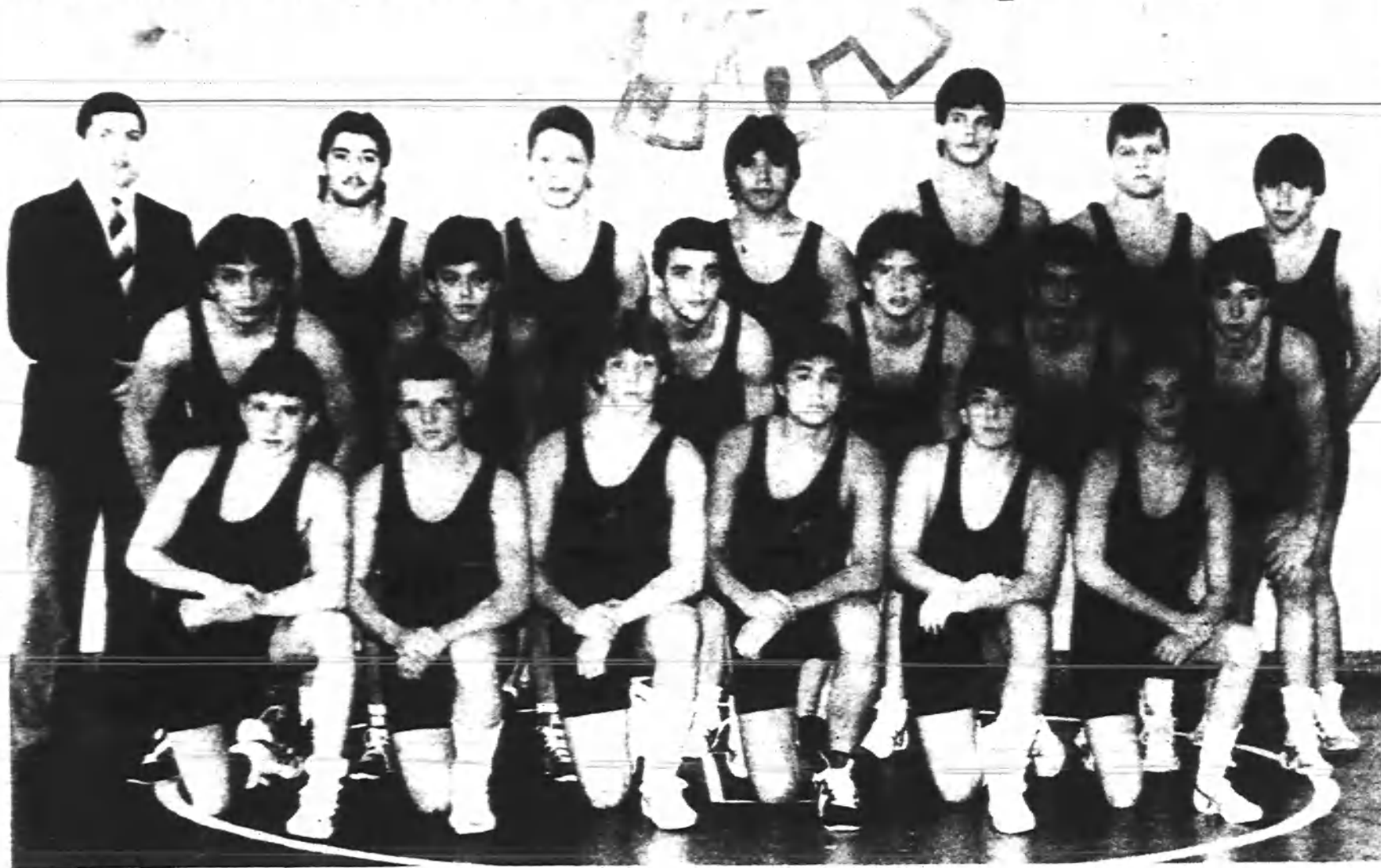
Such will be the case of Jess Wilson this year as he can not do much better than a 41-2 record with more than 20 pins.

"Jess is one of our tri-captains," said Morton, "and was sixth in the states last year after winning first in the league tournament and first in Section VI."

"Obviously," he added, "you can't do too much better but he has set his goals. If he can perform as good as he did last year, his goals are to get 100 wins (he needs 39 this season) and to win a state title."

The other tri-captains are the other Wilson brother, Myron, at 177 pounds, and Joe Bierfeldt at 167.

"Myron won a gold medal at the Empire State Games this



Salamanca's varsity wrestling team takes to the mats Wednesday night for the first time this season. Members of this year's team are front row, left to right Joel Minner, Steve Felt, John Wilson, Mike Warrior, Chris Prybylo and Ed O'Dell, (who is no longer with the team). Center row wrestlers are Chris Printup,

Eric Swiech, Travis Boardman, Tom Mohr, Darby Bess and Bryan Pecora. In the back row are, from left, Coach Rich Morton, Joe Bierfeldt, Mike Strauss, Jess Wilson, Jim Quinn, Curry Hanson and Myron Wilson.

(Press staff photo)

summer," said Morton, "and was 26-9 last year and has improved a lot over the summer. Bierfeldt (24-10-2 last year) also won at the ESG this summer and was second in the league tournament. This year he should be a real strong contender for a Section VI title as he is one of the better wrestlers in his weight class."

Other seniors on the squad are Mike Strauss at 155 pounds, Tom Mohr at 145, Chris Printup at 138 and Travis Boardman at 132.

"Strauss (16-14-2 last year) tries to muscle his opponents too much," Morton observed, "but he should have a decent year and may even wrestle at 145. Mohr (19-11-1) is a light 145-pounder who also won the league championship. He is a bit unorthodox and is wiry but he is always scrapping all over the mat."

"Bierfeldt (24-10-2) won in the Empire State Games this summer," Morton said, "and was second in the league tournament. He should be a real strong contender for a Section VI title this year as he is one of the better kids the area."

"Boardman (20-13) was third in the league tournament," he added, "so he has the experience and I look for good things from him this year."

The rest of the lower weights include returners Eric Swiech, a sophomore at 119 pounds, Steve Felt, a freshman at 98, and a couple of newcomers.

"Swiech (18-17-1) had a decent year," said Morton, "when he weighed only 112. But he has been wrestling since seventh grade so he should improve based on his past performance."

"Felt is in his second year," he said, "and won four matches last year because he was so green. But he worked out during the summer and has gone to camp and some tournaments."

At 112 will be sophomore Joel Minner with Mike Warrior at 126.

"Minner is in his first year of wrestling," Morton said, "so he is going to do a lot of learning. Warrior has some experience but has not wrestled in a few years. He broke a bone against Jeff Prescott (of Olean) two or three years ago in the Empire State Games so he has some background but still he is a light 126 pounder."

The rest of the squad includes junior Gary Hansen who was on the JVs and varsity (5-1) last year at heavyweight; junior Bryan Pecora at 132 or 138; and freshmen Chris Prybylo at 126 or 132 and John Wilson at 132.