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Grapplers Qualify Six For Nat'l Championships

By MARK GESNER

ONEONTA — Great expectations became realities this past weekend as six Albany State wrestlers placed high enough in the SUNY Athletic Conference Tournament to qualify for the national Division III competition. Altogether the Danes captured two firsts, one second, two thirds, one fourth place — adding up to the highest finish the school had ever accomplished in the SUNYACs.

Last Friday and Saturday eight SUNY schools battled it out and more than lived up to their reputation as the toughest Division III wrestling conference in the nation. Albany finished a solid fourth with 85.75 points, trailing the first three teams from Brockport (149), Oswego (113.5), and Buffalo (94). The three leading squads were ranked number one, two, and seven, respectively, out of the country's 350 Division III schools.

"It was a great team effort. They scored more points than any other team I had ever coached in a major tournament," commented head coach Joe DeMeo. In fact, the six place winners represent a new school record for the most qualifiers that Albany has ever sent to the NCAAs.

Vic Herman's (top) hard training last week paved off on Friday and Saturday as he captured a second place finish in the SUNYAC championship tournament at Oneonta. (Photo: Alan Mentler)

Out of the tournament's ten weight class champions, two hailed from Albany. Spero Theofilatos and Andy Seras captured the 134 and 142-weight class titles, respectively.

Theofilatos, seeded fourth among the 134 pounders, put forth "a performance that was nothing short of unbelievable," claimed DeMeo.

Forced to wrestle the top seed, All-American Robert Carbo in the semi-finals, the Dane junior knew he had his hands full. However, putting Carbo's reputation out of his mind, Theofilatos took an early 8-3 lead. But Carbo had no intension of giving up as he struggled back to go on top, 9-8. There was less than 25 seconds remaining the the match when Theofilatos finally maneuvered two reversals and racked up a 12-10 decison.

"I made some mistakes — but I still pulled it out," noted the champion. "As soon as I made it to the finals I was pretty confident that I was going to win it all."

A solid 14-9 victory over second seed Andrew Komarek gave Theofilatos the first place finish. "Throughout the matches he had moments of absolute brilliance — and that is what won it for him in the end," said DeMeo.

Seras, on the other hand, paved a much smoother path to the top. A pin in the first round, followed by a convincing 15-7 win in his second match, enabled the sophomore to breeze into the finals. At last the All-American was forced to wrestle up to his name, as his challenger, Mike Morone, went out to an early 4-0 lead.

Grapplers Fourth in SUNYACs

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"I was surprised that I got thrown to my back — it was the first time all year," explained Seras.

It wasn't long before the defending SUNYAC champ regained control — he went on to an 8-5 win. "He's a great champion. You don't really worry much when a champion is down four points — but Morone deserves respect," commented DeMeo.

Capturing second place in the heavyweight class was Albany team co-captain Vic Herman. In what was labeled as a "grudge match," Herman had to wrestle Oneonta's Rob Jasaitis in the semifinals. The duo had split their two matches during regular season dual meet competition, ruining Herman's otherwise undefeated record (20-1).

The most recent match was on par with their past competitiveness, as Herman edged out his foe 7-6. "When you come back and beat a guy who beat you 13-1, you can come back from almost anything," said DeMeo.

Herman, however, could not come back in the finals, as Brockport's two-time returning SUNYAC champ Chris Haley pinned the Albany junior in six minutes.

"Jasaitis was the one I wanted to beat in this tourney — anything more is just gravy," said Herman before his final match.

Warren Wray, struggling four years to reach his peak, captured a third place in the 126-pound weight class. "Sometimes, when guys are put under that kind of pressure they crumble, but Warren rose to the occasion," said DeMeo.

After the senior won his opener, 10-7, he met defeat in the second round against the eventual second place finisher, Lou Chartrand. However, in his third make-or-break match, Wray crushed his opponent mentally and physically, 10-0, and qualified for the NCAAs.

Since the top four of each weight class in the SUNYACs qualify for the Nationals, Wray's final match determining the third and fourth place finishers was merely a matter of pride. Thus, the 126-pounder was plenty proud when he beat Tom Murphy 21-16 for the third spot. "Warren paid his dues, finally, he got his reward," observed teammate Herman.

Dave Averill also captured a third place finish, soundly defeating his final challenger, 15-6. "My goal was to get in the top three — I fulfilled my goal. In two weeks (the NCAAs) is when it really counts," noted Averill.

"Dave has certainly done a great job as of this point as a freshman. He is still finding out a lot of things about himself," said Coach DeMeo. The 118-pounder was Albany's lone freshman qualifier.

In what was probably the most skilled weight class, Ed Gleason was able to squeak into the fourth spot at 150 pounds. After losing in the first round 12-5 against defending state and SUNYAC champ Kregg Bruno, Gleason wrestled back into glory. The sophomore first edged out Scott Schaddock, 4-3, and then had a breathtaking overtime victory over second seed Sal DeSantos to become a national qualifier.

"If I wrestle the quality wrestling I did today (Saturday), I should fair well in the nationals — maybe an All-American," said Gleason.

The six qualifiers all have kept alive that dream of becoming the honored All-American. However, with the end of the 1982 SUNYACs came the end of three Albany seniors college wrestling careers.

Co-captain Bill Papazian earned a spot on Albany's starting line-up, beating out a teammate who was several pounds heavier than himself. "He has been a tremendous help to me over the years. When elected captain by your peers you know that you have something special," noted DeMeo.

Dave Straub made a good effort in his weight class, but failed to advance to the semifinals. "Dave has been a real contributor to the team. He was willing to move around in weight classes, and really won a lot of matches for us," reflected the coach.

The third senior, Ed Morales, made an accomplishment merely by making it down to his starting weight of 190. After the loss of 45 pounds, Morales was not at full strength for the SUNYACs.

Dan Jeran, the Danes' tenth starter, also put forth a valiant effort in the tournament. Although winning one match, the sophomore was plagued by stalling calls from the referees. Nevertheless, he did score points for Albany with his sixth place finish.

The six qualifiers now begin their training for the Division III NCAAs on February 26 and 27 at Cortland University. "Considering the strenth of our conference (SUNYAC), I think all six of our guys could conceivingly place in the NCAAs," concluded DeMeo.

Great Dane Sports This Week

Women's varsity gymnastics vs. MIT
Tuesday, 2/16 at MIT, 7:00.

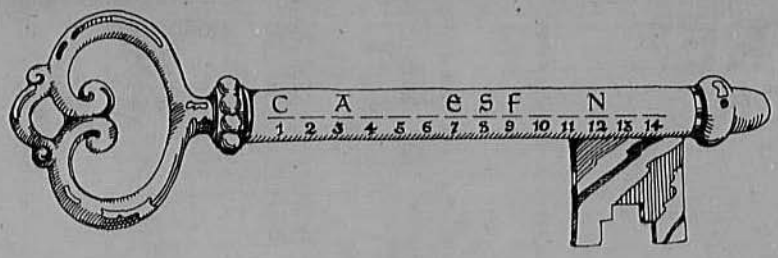
Men's junior varsity basketball vs. JCA
Wednesday, 2/17 in University Gym, 6:30

Women's varsity swimming and diving vs. Hartwick
Wednesday, 2/17 in University Pool, 7:00

Men's varsity basketball vs. Cortland
Wednesday, 2/17 in University Gym, 8:30

THE QUEST OF THE SECRET CITY SWEEPSTAKES

There's a city in Europe-you could travel there free. So unravel these riddles, and uncover its key.



TO PLAY THE GAME:
Answer each of the riddles that will appear here each week in February. Write your answer in the blanks below each riddle. The letters with numbers below them correspond to the numbered spaces in the master key. As you fill in the letters of the master key, you will be spelling the *name and location of a secret city in Europe.* Send us the solution, and you and a friend could win a trip there, free.

TO ENTER SWEEPSTAKES:
1. NO PURCHASE NECESSARY.
2. Grand Prize consists of two regular round-trip economy airfares to the secret city, 30-day Eurail passes, American Youth Hostel passes, two backpacks and $1000 in cash.

3 WHAT AM I?

My arsenal is patience,
My sword is chalk;
My discipline is conscience,