

CIAU wrestling champs face hard season in 89/90

by Riccardo Sala

A championship on the national level is the crown jewel in the eyes of any university athlete and the wrestling Yeomen are no exception. Last year, for the first time in their history, they took home that jewel along with the OUAA provincial title.

The "Twist and Shout" wrestlers, as the Yeomen are also called, practice five days a week in a squash court at Tait Mackenzie. I caught one of their practices last week in the court, a small affair which seems even smaller when three practice bouts are going on at once.

Watching the proceedings were John Park, last year's coach, and Kimin Kim, his successor. Even though Park is not coaching, he still maintains an active presence on the squad, coming by once a week to check up on the team. Under his five-year leadership, the team prospered and the national championship was a fitting way to reward his coaching.

According to Kim, Park's decision to step down was mostly based on personal reasons. "Park needed a career change and wanted to spend more time with his wife and kids," said Kim. "Wrestling would often take Park away from his family on weekends and late weekdays for practices."

Because of his departure, the team has suffered in one very noticeable way. Recruitment of talent was Park forte, and his absence has created holes on the squad. This is a small team, smaller than last year's. The only real rookie on the team is Costas Papanicolaou, a 68 kg class wrestler from Sir Oliver Mowat.

The Yeomen also have to contend with the departure of many of last year's wrestlers. One cruel blow was the loss of Paul Hughes to Simon Fraser University in BC. Hughes took a gold for the Yeomen in the nationals, and grabbed a silver in international competition. Kim said Hughes had reached his full potential at York and needed a new coach and a more competitive environment.

As the team is now, there are no wrestlers in the 114 lb and 198 lb category. Heavyweight Ari Taub, and 143 lb Mike Campatelli are both injured and could be out for the year. One weight class that is secure is the 68 kg class. This is a "popular" weight for wrestlers and there are many Yeomen who are in that class.

Courtney Lewis, gold medallist at the nationals, belongs to this class, as does Gerard Yearwood, and Papanicolaou. Kimin feels this surfeit can be exploited. "We can move some (68 kg) wrestlers up, we can move some down, distribute them," he explained. Lewis for example, will likely be bumped up to the 72 kg class, and the others could be moved around to fill holes in the nearby weight categories.

Injuries are something this team is acutely aware of. As Yearwood said, "We have to watch out for injuries because we don't have the depth to replace them." The small size of this year's squad means that, with the exception of the 68 kg class, there is usually only one wrestler in each class.

The injuries to Taub and Campatelli are examples. Their absence has left the team without any wrestlers in their categories. That's two out of 10 classes, then add the other two where we simply don't have any wrestlers, and you are at six out of 10 weight classes. Then, factor in any potential injuries and you could be looking at a team run on half manpower.

One of the team's strengths for years has been its ability to attract and nurture talent. Reza, a 68 kg Iranian wrestler is an example. While not yet at York, he practices with the squad and hopes to start school soon. Another wrestler is Henry, a high school student who works out with the team to hone his skills.

Curtis Wilson is another wrestler on the sidelines, who was on the team last year and took a silver in the 72 kg class at the nationals. Wilson is working and hopes to earn enough money to restart school in January and thereby get back into action.

Roger Levesque, who wrestles in the 76-80 kg class, tried out last year for the team but didn't make the cut. He's back this year, and is certain to make the lineup.

Another facet of "Twist and Shout" wrestling is its role as a national training centre. One of several in the country, it receives money from the federal and provincial government because of this status. Park worked extensively with the Canadian national team and, as coach of the Yeomen, managed to persuade very promising talent to come to York.

For now, the team's most pressing concern is facilities. The squash court is too small. When practice matches are held, the place becomes very crowded. Kimin echoed his wrestlers sentiments when he blasted the facility. He felt that, in a crowded facility, his wrestlers are more likely to get hurt when practising.

The road to the CIAU championship will likely be rocky this year, and a real test of the club's abilities. Most of the wrestlers have been at the pinnacle before, and have had the pleasure of standing on top and being recognized as the best in the nation. The season starts the first weekend in November with a tournament at McMaster. Hopefully when the OUAA and CIAU finals start in early March, the Yeomen will be there and will be able to say, it's all old, we've been here before and we're going to be the best again. Deja vu.

SPORT YORK RESULTS

(October 9-15)

Tuesday, October 10
FIELD HOCKEY: Yeowomen 1 (Tammy Holt) - UofT 0

Wednesday, October 11
SOCCER: Yeowomen 10 (Sam Hellens 3, Heather Gough 3)

Thursday, October 12
HOCKEY: Yeomen 5 (Ian Ferguson 2) - Dalhousie 3

Saturday, October 14
FOOTBALL: Western 52 - York 1
SOCCER: Yeomen 4 (Hunter Madeley 2) - RMC 0
Yeowomen 2 - Carlton 2

HOCKEY: Western 5 - Yeomen 3
FIELD HOCKEY: Yeowomen 2 - Waterloo 0
Western 1 - Yeowomen 0

BADMINTON: Queen's 8 - Yeowomen 0
TENNIS: Yeowomen 7 - Laurier 0
Yeowomen 0 - U of T 9

VOLLEYBALL: Yeomen vs. Queen's 6-15, 15-10
Yeomen vs. Laurier 15-12, 6-15
Yeomen vs. Waterloo 6-15, 4-15
Yeomen vs. Brock (semi-final) 15-8, 15-8
Yeomen vs. Laurier (final) 15-9, 14-16, 15-12

Sunday, October 15
SOCCER: Yeomen 1 - Queen's 1
Yeowomen 5 - Trent 0
Yeomen 8 - Guelph 3

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