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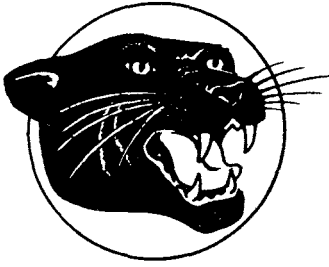
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Panther Sports News

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Feb. 24, 1981
LS-AS-Wrestling

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHARLESTON, IL--Eastern Illinois University wrestling coach Ron Clinton doesn't mince words. He thinks this is the year his Panther wrestlers are going to win the NCAA II National Championship.

Ranked No. 2 in the nation by Amateur Wrestling News, EIU will get the opportunity to prove his beliefs this Saturday and Sunday (Feb. 28-March 1) at Cal-Davis.

"I can't see how we can be denied this time," says Clinton, who had nine wrestlers qualify (out of ten classes) at last Saturday's Great Lakes Regional.

"We have been too close before, are too talented and have worked too hard . . . but we still have final exams coming up.

"Cal-Bakersfield is the obvious favorite, and with the meet in California everyone will be expecting them to win again, so we relish the role of the underdog.

"This meet has never been won by anyone east of the Mississippi River . . . we want the title since it's our last chance," Clinton said, in reference to the Panthers move to Division I next fall.

Bakersfield, ranked No. 1, has won four of the last five years. EIU finished 1/4 point behind Bakersfield in '79 and was third last season.

"We should place in the top four in eight of the classes . . . we'll need at least three national champions to win it as a team. I think our best chances are at 167, 177 and 190."

Geno Savegnago (Carol Stream-Glenbard North) is the best bet. Having finished second the past two years at 190, Savegnago has put together a remarkable regular season.

He has a 34-2 record with a school record seven tournament championships and 19 pins. "It would be an upset for anyone to beat him . . . it could happen but we're expecting this to be his year," says Clinton.

Mark Gronowski (Titusville, FL) at 167 rates just behind Savegnago as the most consistent wrestler with a 31-3 mark. "We're confident Mark will have a good tournament.

"He has already beaten the defending national champ (Augustana's John Lundberg), and it was a major victory (14-4) . . . it will take a real talent to get by Mark."

At 177 Dennis McCormick (Springfield) is the sleeper. Eligible at the semester, McCormick has wrestled just seven matches, all victories.

"Dennis is in shape . . . in those matches he's had a major victory (by eight points) and a superior win (by 12 points) so he's been dominant. Not many know about him but they will after the tournament."

Beyond these three potential champs, Clinton predicts high finishes for Derek Porter (Mims, FL-Titusville), Doug Schafer (Sterling) and Mike Polz (Riverside-Brookfield) at 126, 134 and 158, respectively.

The other three are Bryan Murphy (LaGrange-Lyons) at 118, Bob Ryan (Wooddale-Fenton) at 142 and Kent Lawrence (Coal Valley-Moline) at heavyweight.

The complete list is as follows:

118	Bryan Murphy (LaGrange-Lyons)	23-8-1
126	Derek Porter (Mims, FL-Titusville)	27-5-2
134	Doug Schafer (Sterling)	10-2
142	Bob Ryan (Wooddale-Fenton)	23-8
158	Mike Polz (Riverside-Brookfield)	26-7
167	Mark Gronowski (Titusville, FL)	31-3
177	Dennis McCormick (Springfield)	7-0
190	Geno Savegnago (Carol Stream-Glenbard North)	34-2
HWT	Kent Lawrence (Coal Valley-Moline)	2-6