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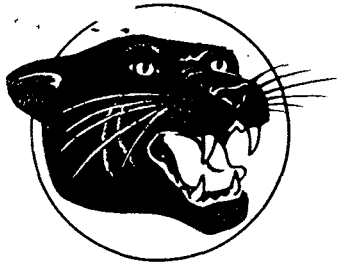
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Panther Sports News

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHARLESTON, IL (Feb. 24, 1986) -- The Eastern Illinois wrestling team is

riding high on a 10-2 dual meet record this week after defeating the University of Illinois last Thursday. But the team record means nothing as the Panthers enter the Midwest Regionals this week at Southwest Missouri.

The Midwest Regionals are the qualifying meet to get into the national meet next week. The team record has no bearing in this meet, it's all individual performances, according to Eastern head coach Ralph McCausland. The meet will consist of ten full teams and two partial teams, with the top three qualifiers from each weight class advancing to the national meet.

Eastern's Chris McFarland (158) has been the Panthers most consistent wrestler all season with a 32-2 overall record. McFarland has won 21 consecutive matches and needs only two more victories to break the Eastern Illinois record for most consecutive matches won.

Individual records are important in this meet, because from the records comes the seedings, according to McCausland. "Seedings are a critical part of this meet," McCausland said. "They play a big role, we just have to take it one match at a time."

Ozzie Porter is another favorite for Eastern. Porter has compiled a 26-4 record in the 167 lb. weight class. "Porter has all the talent to advance to nationals," McCausland said. "But he has a tendency to hold back in some matches, when he opens up, he scores alot of points."

Freshman Marty Molina has come on strong in the past four weeks for the Panthers, and if he can keep it up he has a good chance to advance, according to McCausland. "Marty has been wrestling really well, he's wrestling with a lot of confidence now," said McCausland. "Especially after he beat Steve Meyers of Purdue and then came back and beat Dave Barber of Illinois."

Eastern's only All-American from last year, Mark Ruettiger, is also expected to fair well in Regionals. Ruettiger has only wrestled three matches since being

reinstated by the NCAA after they changed the interpretation of a rule that made him ineligible all season. Ruettiger placed sixth in the nation last year and hopes to better that performance this year.

"Everybody on the team has been wrestling well, this is the time when everything needs to be clicking," McCausland said.

The Panthers will depart for Southwest Missouri on Wednesday, weigh in will be on Thursday, and the meet will begin on Friday.

Lincoln Junior College transfer Demetrius Harper has also had an impressive season with a 25-9-3 record. Harper has proved that he can wrestle under pressure. Against Purdue and Illinois the outcome of the meet came down to the final bout and Harper came through in both meets with victories that gave Eastern the win.