

St. John Arena in Steubenville will be the new scene for the 22nd annual OVAC Wrestling Tournament, January 22, 23, 24, 1976.

39 TEAMS, 469 WRESTLERS ENTERED

Classy OVAC Wrestling Event Set to Open at St. John Arena

They start separating the wheat from the chaff tonight in the biggest and classiest Ohio Valley Athletic Conference wrestling tournament in history.

St. John Arena in Steubenville is the scene for the three-day event which has drawn a field of 39 teams and a record 469 competitors.

They'll also be holding matches on more mats than ever before as eight will be in use during the preliminaries and early rounds of action leading up to Saturday night's spectacular windup when the consolation finals and championship matches will be held.

Tonight's preliminaries and first round competition start at 6 p.m., with the second session slated to begin on Friday at 1 o'clock. Action in the quarter-finals and eliminations in the consolation brackets is set for Friday night, starting at 7 p.m. Semi-finals and further consolation bouts will be held at 1 p.m.,

Saturday, with the windup session starting that night at 7 p.m.

Over \$700 worth of trophies, all donated by merchants in the upper Ohio Valley area, will be presented during the awards ceremony on Saturday night.

The tournament will continue under the format which was introduced last year. While wrestlers from the various schools will be pitted against each other regardless of the size of their respective schools, and while there will be only one individual champion in each weight class, team trophies will be awarded to the schools and the runners up with the highest number of points in each of the three divisions of the conference. Individual trophies will be awarded to the six place-winners in each weight class.

Warwood is the defending overall, and Class A champion as Coach Eric Carder's Vikings compiled a total of 101 1/2 points to 100

for runner-up John Marshall, which led the triple-A squads. The Monarchs were the OVAC titlist the previous three years when only one winner was named. Union Local was the top team in the double-A ranks in 1975 as they placed third in the overall team standings with 91 1/2 points.

The competition for team honors figures to be just as tight and hectic as ever with Warwood again a power to be reckoned with along with the Monarchs, Weirich, Union Local, Parkersburg South, Parkersburg and possibly Cadiz.

Parkersburg South won the West Virginia championship last year but this is its Patriots first campaign as a fullfledged member of the OVAC. Other new entrants to the conference ranks are Marietta and the Parkersburg Big Reds.

Four winners from last year are back but only two compete in the same weight class. Cadiz' Randy Davia will be defending his crown at 175 pounds, while Linsly Institute's Mike Caruso is

back for another crack at 126-pound laurels. Union Local's Mike Gregg, the 1975 winner at 105 pounds, is top seeded at 119 this year, while Brooke's Lou Geary, who was a winner at 155, is seeded second behind Jefferson Union's undefeated Rich Davis at 167 pounds.

A total of 12 wrestlers were seeded in each of the 13 weight classes. None of the seeded competitors will see action in the preliminary round.

Officials selected to work the tournament include Walt Tolarchyk, North Canton; Larry Deaton, Martins Ferry; John Vogelmeier, Columbus; Dick Rausch, New Philadelphia; Frank Mossier, Waynesburg; Vince Monseau, West Liberty State; Bob Mathias, New Philadelphia; Jeff Stolz, Shadyside; Jerry Tagnaglia, Pittsburgh; Art Hehr, Skyvue High; Lou Vendetti, Canton; Joe Bates, Woodsfield; Bill Popki, Gnadenhütten; Doug Mason, Follansbee; and Mark Nichols, Cadiz.

By NICK BEDWAY
Associate Sports Editor

St. John Arena in Steubenville will be the site this week for what will be the largest and possibly the strongest field in history for the Ohio Valley Athletic Conference wrestling tournament.

With first-year OVAC members Parkersburg, defending West Virginia champion Parkersburg South and Marietta set to compete, there will be 89 teams and upwards of 475 athletes entered for the three days of competition which begin on Thursday evening and continue through Saturday night.

Meet Director Bob Hedmond, the athletic director at Steubenville High School, said that Thursday's preliminaries and first round matches will start at 6 p.m. The second round is set to get underway on Friday at 1 p.m., with quarter-finals and competition in the consolation brackets set for Friday evening, beginning at 7 p.m. Semi-finals and further consolation action will start at 1 p.m. Saturday with the championship matches in all weight classes, along with bouts to determine third, fourth, fifth and sixth place in each weight class to be held on Saturday evening starting at 7 p.m.

As many as eight mats will be in use at the same time during the early rounds of the eliminations.

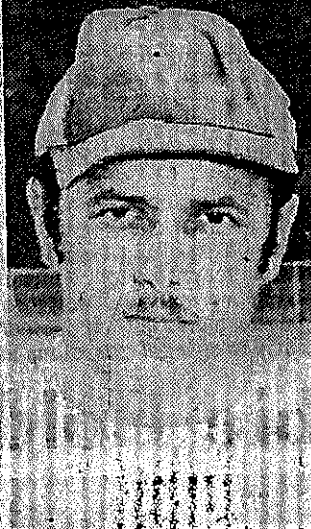
The tournament will continue under the format which was introduced last year. While wrestlers from the various schools will be pitted against each other, regardless of the size of their respective schools, and while there will be only one individual champion in each weight class, team trophies will be awarded to the schools and the runners-up

with the highest number of points in each of the three divisions of the conference. Individual trophies will be awarded to the six place-winners in each weight class.

In last year's tourney, Warwood, the top scorer in the Class A ranks, also became the overall winner as the Vikings dethroned defending champion John Marshall by a 101 1/2 to 100 score. The Monarchs were the triple-A leaders, however, while Union Local was the top team in the double-A ranks. The Jets also placed third in the overall team standings with 91 1/2 points while Weirton, expected to be one of the leading contenders this year, was fourth with 85 1/2 points.

Weight-ins begin at 2 p.m. on Thursday, 9:30 a.m. Friday, and at 9:30 on Saturday morning.

Admission to the tour-



ERIC CARDER

Warwood coach

namment will be \$2 for adults and \$1 for students for each session. Available are tournament books, good for all sessions. The books are priced at \$8 for adults and \$3

for students.

While Warwood became a first-time winner last year, previous team championships have been dominated by Bridgeport, Martins Ferry and the Monarchs. The Bulldogs captured top honors every year from 1954 through 1960 under the direction of George Kovalick, while John "Corky" Vrdsos piloted Martins Ferry to eight straight championships from 1961 through 1968. St. John's Central, led by Joe Bates, won in 1969, while Wheeling Central, coached by John Hibbert, led the way in 1970. The 1971 winner was St. John's Central with Denny Bowman at the helm this time. Billy Hinegardner's John Marshall matmen then swept the title three straight years before being unseated by the Vikings.

At this point, the strongest contenders appear to be

Warwood and Weirton, both unbeaten in dual competition, along with Parkersburg South, Parkersburg, the Monarchs and possibly Cadiz.

Individual winners back are Mike Gregg, Union Local who was the 105-pound winner, Jay Geary of Brooke, who won at 125 pounds, and Cadiz Randy Davis, the 175-pound champion.

Warwood's defending champs already has a couple of tournament wins under its belts as the Vikings have taken the Wintersville and Brooke invitational crowns. Weirton has won the Mountaineer League tournament and the East Liverpool invitational.

A coaches' meeting has been called for tomorrow night, starting at 7 o'clock, at St. John Arena to determine the seedings and first round pairings.

Biggest Field Ever to Compete

In OVAC Mat Tourney

This Week

JU WINS IN 'AA'; VIKES TOP 'A' TEAM

Red Riders Gain First OVAC Wrestling Crown in History

By JIM COCHRAN and BRIAN BONENBERGER

Weir High won its first ever Ohio Valley Athletic Conference wrestling championship Saturday night at St. John Arena in Steubenville, with a convincing margin over Warwood, last year's champ.

Weir piled up up 162 1/2 points to capture the overall championship as well as the Class AAA honors. Warwood, the single A champ for the second straight year, was second overall with 136 1/2, followed by a string of triple-A schools, including first-year conference members Parkersburg with 126 1/2 and Parkersburg South with 113. Brooke High rounded out the top five with 112 points.

Jefferson Union captured the Class AA championship with 85 1/2 points, with Cadiz taking runnerup honors with 78 1/2. Beallsville was a distant second behind Warwood in Class A with 51.

Cadiz High defending champion Randy Davia and Bridgeport's giant-killing 119-pounder Ed Covey tied in the balloting for the Dave Bierkorte Memorial Award, symbolic of the most valuable wrestler of the 38-team tourney.

Davia won his second straight crown with a 2:07 pin over Martins Ferry junior John Schuller, his fourth pin of the tourney to go along with a 12-0 decision. Davia's first two pins came in less than one minute. The Cadiz strongman raised his spotless record to 12-0 with

the victory, while Schuller is now 14-2 on the season.

Bridgeport's Covey thrived on being the underdog as the seventh seed in the 119 class, downed the number two seed, Warwood's Greg Jewell, in the quarterfinals, and bested the number four seed, Martins Ferry's Jeff Oberdick, in the semis. In the finals, he scooped a 4-3 decision over the fourth seed, Parkersburg's Dave Hedrick. Covey's five tourney wins raised his mark to 11-2, with Hedrick falling to 16-3.

Weirton had two winners in, heavyweight Sheldon Grace, returning to the throne after a year's absence, and 167-pounder Steve Gaudreau, who scored an upset win over defending champ Lou Geary of Brooke in the finals.

Grace, winner of the Bierkorte award as a soph at 175 via five straight pins, had to settle for third at the same weight last year after being upset by Davia in the semis. He pulled the pin trick again this week, making Bellaire 300-pounder Dennis 'Moose' Morris his fifth victim in 5:27. Grace is now 17-0 on the season, while Morris suffered his first defeat to fall to 10-1.

Gaudreau, third last year at the same weight, celebrated Saturday acceptance into the Air Force Academy by avenging his only loss this season with a 5-1 win over Geary. His record is now 14-1 after entering the event as the

fourth seed and besting first seed Rich Davis in the semis. Geary, the champ at 155 last year, suffered his second loss in 18 decisions. He was awarded second seed in the pre-match meetings.

Warwood's only champion, as well as his team's only finalist for the past two seasons, was 132-pounder Ron Stanley, besting defending West Virginia state champion Brad Dornick by a 5-1 score in the finals. Stanley lost a high-scoring decision to Linsly's Stan Caruso in last year's 126 finals. In winning the battle of unbeatens, the top-seeded Stanley raised his mark to 15-0. The third-seeded Dornick fell to 18-1.

Parkersburg South's championship hopes were high after 98-pound soph Pat Sole defeated John Marshall junior Tom Defibaugh by a 5-0 score in another battle of unbeatens. Sole, now 16-0, was the first of four Patriot finalists and the only winner. Defibaugh lost his first after 16 wins.

Union Local's Kelly Wallace won his 13th straight match in the 105 finals, besting South's Woody Burns, 6-0. A first-period takedown with one second left got Wallace on the way to victory. Burns, fifth in the state at 105 last year, is now 16-2.

Brooke's Bruce Ferguson, the fourth seed at 112, won his 14th match against one loss with a 2-1 decision over South's Dan Underwood, the top seed with a 13-4 record now. A reverse with just 40

seconds left gave Ferguson the win.

Steubenville's John Truini won an overtime referee's decision over Cadiz mite Jeff DeLucas in the 126 finals. The score was 4-4 at the end of regulation and 1-1 after the overtime. Truini, now 10-1, downed defending champ Caruso in the semis. DeLucas, now 11-1 was third seed as well as placing third last year.

Martins Ferry's Brian Hicks pinned unseeded Rodney Johnson in 1:25 of overtime to take the 138-pound final. The score was tied 5-5 after regulation. Hicks is now 15-4, with Johnson at 9-2. Hicks entered as the fifth seed.

Oak Glen's Chuck Martin, the 10th seed, pinned unseeded Brian Edison in the second period of their final after Martin had built a 10-1 lead.

The other two champs we hailed from third place Parkersburg. First seed Tom Winters at 155 won his 15th match against a loss and a tie by downing seventh-seeded Randy Snyder of Jefferson Union by a 6-1 score.

Luke Spencer scored an escape with just 50 seconds remaining to score an upset over top-seeded Bob Thayer of East Liverpool in the 185-pound finals. Thayer fell to 11-2, while Spencer won his 17th against a single loss.



OVAC Individual Wrestling Champions

Individual winners in the 22nd annual Ohio Valley Athletic Conference wrestling tournament, which concluded Saturday at St. John Arena in Steubenville, are front row, left to right, 98-pound Pat Sole, Parkersburg South; 105-pound Kelly Wallace, Union Local; 112-pound Bruce Ferguson, Brooke; 119-pound Ed Covey, Bridgeport; 125-pound John Truini, Steubenville; and 132-pound Ron Stanley, Warwood. Back row, left to right,

138-pound Brian Hicks, Martins Ferry; 145-pound Chuck Martin, Oak Glen; 155-pound Tom Winters, Parkersburg; 167-pound Steve Gaudreau, of overall champion Weirton; 175-pound Randy Davia, Cadiz; 185-pound Luke Spencer, Parkersburg; and heavyweight Sheldon Grace, Weirton. Davia and Covey were named as the most valuable wrestlers in the event.

(News-Register Photo-Cochran)

OVAC 'Mr. Mat' Award Goes to Vet Kovalick

Officials of the Ohio Valley Athletic Conference presented their first annual Mr. Mat Award Saturday night at St. John Arena in Steubenville and they couldn't have picked a better initial recipient than George Kovalick.

The award is to be presented annually to a person who has contributed greatly to the success of wrestling in the Ohio Valley.

Kovalick has had a long and distinguished coaching career in the area, piloting teams at Bridgeport, Moundsville, Weirton and West Liberty State College. He currently is an assistant football and wrestling mentor at Bellaire High.

Kovalick, who was a football and baseball standout at Bridgeport, began his coaching career at his alma mater in 1950 and in the same year introduced wrestling at the school. He developed the Bulldogs into one of Ohio's top wrestling powers and ended Cleveland's domination of the state mat tournament when Bridgeport captured the Ohio title in 1959. He directed the Bulldogs to seven straight OVAC wrestling titles, while also serving first as assistant and then head football coach and head baseball mentor. Kovalick had four Eastern Ohio League and district

baseball champions and won three OVAC crowns.

In 1961 he was appointed head wrestling and baseball coach and assistant football coach at West Liberty State College. His baseball team won two straight West Virginia Intercollegiate Conference titles and were NAIA champions in 1963.

He took over as head football mentor in 1962 and for the next two seasons his Hilltopper squad lost only two games. The Gold and Black were WVIC titlists in 1963.

Kovalick had one NAIA wrestling champion in Bobby Douglas, who is now head coach at Arizona State University where one of his athletes is Mike Kovalick,

son of Douglas was NCAA runner-up in 1963 at Oklahoma the honored area mentor, State and was twice a member of the U.S. Olympic team.

In 1965, Kovalick took over the football reins at Moundsville High where he stayed until the John Marshall consolidation in 1967. He then moved to California where he spent three years.

Upon his return, he took over the head football and assistant wrestling jobs at Weirton High where he remained until 1974. He and head coach Don Poluszek piloted the Red Rider mat team in 1973 to second place finishes in both both the West Virginia and OVAC tournaments and Kovalick was selected "Wrestling Coach of the Year" in the Mountain State.

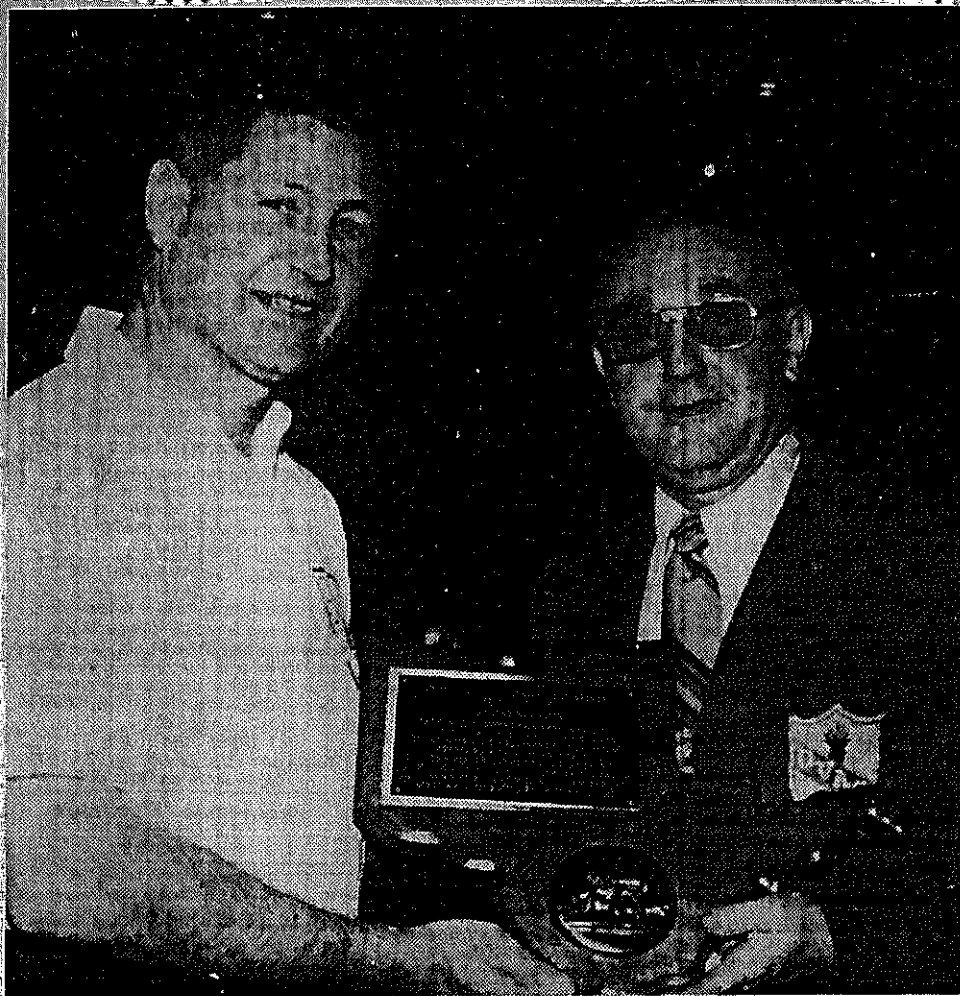
Kovalick's 1973 Weirton football team was runner-up in the state, losing to East Bank in the championship contest.

Since then he has moved to Bellaire High where he is assistant coach in both football and wrestling.

Kovalick's son Mike was both a West Virginia and Ohio state champion, capturing the latter title last year at St. John Arena in Columbus where his father's 1959 Bulldog team won the state title.



GEORGE KOVALICK
deserving honoree



Kovalick Gets 'Mr. Mat' Award

George Kovalick, left, is presented the first annual "Mr. Mat Award" by Ohio Valley Athletic Conference Executive Secretary Sam Mumley during ceremonies at the conclusion of the giant OVAC wrestling tournament at St. John Arena in Steubenville Saturday night. The

award will be presented annually to a person who has contributed greatly to the success of wrestling in the Ohio Valley. Kovalick has had a long and distinguished coaching career in the area.

(News-Register Photo—Cochran)

Mr. Mat Award presented to George Kovalick, January 24, 1976, at the OVAC Wrestling Tournament.