

480 Wrestlers From 37 Schools Compete

# OVAC Mat Tourney Opens Thursday At Civic Center

By BILL VAN HORNE  
News-Register Sports Editor

The high school wrestling spectacular of the local season, the thirty-second annual Ohio Valley Athletic Conference tournament, will be launched on Thursday night at Wheeling Civic Center and continue through Saturday.

Approximately 225 bouts will be contested before the last buzzer of the opening night is sounded. Eight mats will be spread over the arena floor.

The tourney will bring to the Civic Center some 480 wrestlers from 37 high schools. Only 13 of those wrestlers will be crowned as champions at Saturday night's final session.

Defending team titlists will be Steubenville, which won its third four-A division crown as well as the over-all title last January; Martins Ferry, triple-A kingpin for the fourth time in seven years; Cadiz, double-A leader for the seventh straight season; and Cameron, Class A.

The 1984 individual champions returning are Wheeling Park's Rich DiGiandomenico, who has moved up from 105 pounds to 126; Brent Taggart, East Liverpool, up from 138 to 155; Brian Young, Steubenville, up from 175 to 185; Charlie Keenan, Steubenville, up from 185 to heavyweight; and Tim Moxley, Barnesville, heavyweight.

Both Keenan and Moxley pinned their way through the OVAC tournament last year and both were also Ohio state double-A champions but, with Keenan invading the heavyweight ranks, one or the other is bound to face a rare loss this week. If they meet in the tournament, it could be a fitting climax to the competition.

Teams in the tournament field include:

CLASS AAAA--John Marshall, East Liverpool, Steubenville, St. Clairsville, Oak Glen, Wheeling Park, Wintersville, Brooke, Weir, Bellaire, and Cambridge.

CLASS AAA--Jefferson Union, River, Meadowbrook, Buckeye

North, Steubenville Catholic, Martins Ferry, Union Local, Magnolia, Barnesville, Wheeling Central, and Toronto.

CLASS AA--Cadiz, Wellsville, Bridgeport, Linsly, Mingo, and Shenandoah.

CLASS A--Cameron, Weirton Madonna, Bellaire St. John's Central, Bishop Donahue, Springfield, Buckeye West, Stanton Local, Beallsville and Shadyside.

Preceding Thursday night's session, there will be a special ceremony held by the Ohio Wrestling Coaches Association at 6 p.m. to honor George Kovalick, whose death last April ended a tremendously successful career in athletics, marked by triumphs in wrestling, football and baseball and by significant contributions to the sports program of the OVAC--and especially to wrestling. A plaque, bearing a likeness of Coach

Kovalick and paying tribute to him, will be unveiled, with all of the wrestlers participating in the tournament on hand. Mrs. Evelyn Kovalick will unveil the plaque. The coaches' OVAC scholarship award has been named in Kovalick's honor.

Thursday night's session will be followed up by matinee and evening action on Friday. The afternoon session, starting at 2 o'clock, will highlight second-round matches. Quarter-finals and consolation matches are on tap for Friday night, starting at 6 p.m. Semi-finals and further consolations will start at 1 p.m. Saturday.

The final session gets underway at 6 p.m. Saturday with seventh-eighth place matches, followed by the championship matches and those to determine, third, fourth, fifth and sixth place in each weight class.

On Saturday night, the OVAC champions of 25 years ago will be honored on their 25th anniversary. They will be seated in a special area on the main floor and will present awards to the 1985 individual titlists.

The prestigious Mr. Mat Award, annually awarded to a person who has made valuable contributions to valley wrestling, will be presented Saturday night, along with the "coach of the year" award, the outstanding junior high coach award, and the pioneer award.

There will be team trophies for the champion and runnerup teams in each class. A rotating plaque will go to the over-all tourney champion. There will be awards for the eight individual place-winners in each weight class. Team and individual awards have been donated by Al "Lefty" Didriksen, operator of the McDonald franchises in Warwood, Wheeling, Moundsville and the Ohio Valley Mall.

Tickets for each session of the tournament are priced at \$3 for adults and \$2 for students. Ticket books, which include tickets for all five sessions, are priced at \$10 for adults and \$5 for students.

Ron Mauck, former Brooke High coach, will again be tournament director, with Bill Hinegardner, ex-John Marshall coach, and Dennis Bowman, ex-Bellaire High and St. John's coach, as assistants.

Referees will be Bob Bender, Martins Ferry; Jim Crosier, Barnesville; Shawn Crosier, Steubenville; Larry Deaton, Martins Ferry; Dave DeYarmon, East Liverpool; Steve Kish, Bellaire High principal; Tom Lackman, Toronto; Jerry Mobley, Paden City; Larry Rine, Moundsville; John Snively, girls' track coach at John Marshall; Dave Snider, Weirton; Anthony Vcelka, St. Clairsville.

★ ★ ★

## Past Champions Of OVAC Mat Tournament

Past over-all champions of the OVAC wrestling tournament, listed with their head coaches, follow:

1954--Bridgeport, George Kovalick.  
1955--Bridgeport, George Kovalick.  
1956--Bridgeport, George Kovalick.  
1957--Bridgeport, George Kovalick.  
1958--Bridgeport, George Kovalick.  
1959--Bridgeport, George Kovalick.  
1960--Bridgeport, George Kovalick.  
1961--Martins Ferry, John Vrotsos.  
1962--Martins Ferry, John Vrotsos.  
1963--Martins Ferry, John Vrotsos.  
1964--Martins Ferry, John Vrotsos.  
1965--Martins Ferry, John Vrotsos.  
1966--Martins Ferry, John Vrotsos.  
1967--Martins Ferry, John Vrotsos.  
1968--Martins Ferry, Art Hehr.  
1969--Bellaire St. John's, Joe Bates.  
1970--Wheeling Central, John Hibbert.  
1971--Bellaire St. John's, Dennis Bowman.  
1972--John Marshall, Bill Hinegardner.  
1973--John Marshall, Bill Hinegardner.  
1974--John Marshall, Bill Hinegardner.  
1975--Warwood, Eric Carder.  
1976--Weir, Charles "Skip" Murray.  
1977--John Marshall, Bill Hinegardner.  
1978--Wheeling Park, Eric Carder.  
1979--Wheeling Park, Eric Carder.  
1980--Steubenville, John Craig.  
1981--Cadiz, John Stephenson.  
1982--Steubenville, John Craig.  
1983--John Marshall, Ed Dugasi.  
1984--Steubenville, John Craig.

## SPORTS

# Ceremony to launch OVAC mat tourney

A colorful tribute honoring the late George Kovalick will help launch the 32nd annual OVAC Wrestling Tournament at the Wheeling Civic Center this evening.

The ceremony will begin at 6 and will feature the unveiling of a large plaque by Kovalick's widow, Evelyn. The plaque will be placed on permanent display at the Civic Center as a memorial to the long-time coach who played an instrumental role in developing the sport throughout the Ohio Valley.

More than 450 wrestlers from 37 schools will enter the main arena in an Olympic-style march just prior to the unveiling of the plaque which was provided by the Ohio Valley Wrestling Coaches Association.

Shortly afterwards, wrestlers will take to the eighth mats to begin the long and arduous drive towards Saturday night's finals.

About 200 preliminary and first-round bouts will be held Thursday night. The second session, set for 2 p.m. Friday, will consist of second round bouts. The third session begins at 6 p.m. Friday and will consist of quarterfinals and consolation bouts.

This will set the stage for the final two sessions on Saturday. The first, at 1, will consist of the semifinals and consolation bouts, including those to determine the seventh and eighth-place finishers.

The finals, beginning at 6, will be the first time during the entire three, rather than eight, mats will be in use as bouts to determine first-through-sixth place winners in the 13 weight classes will be offered.

Prior to Saturday night's finals, there will be additional ceremonies. They will honor John Craig, coach of Steubenville's team which was overall champion a year ago; recipient of the "Mr. Mat Award," given to a person who has contributed to the growth of the sport; and to a junior high coach for the same reason. Additionally, the 1960 OVAC champs who will gather for their 25th reunion, will be recognized.

Observers feel this year's tournament could be one of the closest in recent years. As many as seven schools are given a chance to capture overall honors. They include 4-A powers Steubenville, East Liverpool, John Marshall, St. Clairsville and Oak Glen. Barnesville is given best chance among 3-A schools, although River and Jefferson Union should make their presence felt. Among the smaller schools, perennial powerhouse Cadiz looms as a contender, while Bridgeport and Cameron figures to score well.

Steubenville, in addition to winning overall laurels, was also 4-A champ last year. Other divisional defending champions are Martins Ferry in 3-A, Cadiz

in 2-A and Cameron in 1-A.

Top-seeded wrestlers are Chance Taylor, Wheeling Park sophomore at 98 pounds; Tim Young, Steubenville senior at 105; Shawn Bell, Barnesville junior at 112; Cary Sigler, Union Local junior at 119; Steve Polinsky, St. Clairsville senior at 126; Todd Hibbs, Jefferson Union senior at 132; Ron Trowbridge, Cameron senior at 138; Mike Knox, John Marshall senior at 145; Brent Taggart, East Liverpool senior at 155; Paul Current, Steubenville senior at 167; Todd Atkins, Cadiz junior at 175; Brian Young, Steubenville junior at 185; and Tim Moxley, Barnesville senior at heavyweight.

There are five 1984 champions in the field. Richard Digiamdomenico of Wheeling Park won at 105 last year and is competing at 126 this year; Taggart won at 138 last year; Brian Young was 175-pound champ a year ago; Charlie Keenan won at 185 last year and is competing at heavyweight; and Moxley.

The possible heavyweight showdown between Keenan and Moxley has heightened interest in the tournament. Both wrestlers won Ohio Class AA championships as junior and both are unbeaten since the end of their sophomore seasons.

This possible matchup has created so much interest that Ohio State football coach Earle Bruce and one of his assistants, Fred Pagac, have indicated they'll attend Saturday night's finals. Both wrestlers have committed to play football at OSU.

Another feature of the finals Saturday night will be the announcement of the tournament's outstanding wrestler. This individual is determined by vote of the coaches and he'll be presented with the David Bierkorte Memorial Award when the OVAC holds its Spring Awards Banquet at Oglebay Park in early May.