

Athletes From 37 Schools Vie At Civic Center

Giant OVAC Wrestling Tournament Opens

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After a colorful Olympic-style opening ceremony, they get right down to business in the thirty-fourth annual Ohio Valley Athletic Conference wrestling tournament tonight at the Wheeling Civic Center.

There will be eight mats used in tonight's session and each of the two Friday sessions as the process of reducing a field of over 400 hopefuls to 13 tried and true individual champions moves along.

The schedule calls for weigh-ins from 4:30 to 5:30 this afternoon (13 scales are being used) and warm-ups from 5:35 to 6 p.m. At approximately 6:05, the procession of 37 teams into the arena, each marching behind its school colors, will begin.

The ceremonies will take nearly a half-hour, including the entry and exit of the multi-colored array of matmen, the flag-raising, the opening prayer by West Liberty State College Coach Vince Monseau, and "The Star Spangled Banner", performed by Dave Dayton, of John Marshall High.

The on-deck call for the initial set of wrestlers in the preliminary round will go out at about 8:35.

If tonight's action follows the usual pattern of opening-night combat in the giant tournament, there will be plenty of pins in preliminary bouts and full first-round action as, due to the seeding system, the most talented and often the most experienced grapplers entered will be pitted against the young, less talented, and often inexperienced. That, of course, is part of separating the wheat from the chaff.

However, in a sport such as wrestling, last year's chaff turns out to be this year's wheat. Athletes who were greenhorns on the mat a year ago will take to the arena floor with greater confidence, more seasoning and higher hopes.

East Liverpool, which won its first OVAC wrestling title last year, is expected to make a strong defense of its over-all and four-A championship.

Three-time ruler Steubenville Big Red looks like a legitimate threat in the "big school" class but it is entirely possible that the four-A champion will not be the over-all winner.

A pair of powerhouse double-A teams, Cadiz and Bridgeport, will welcome the opportunity to take on their big-school brethren. Cadiz has won 10 straight double-A divisional titles but Dave Lamotte's Bulldogs may threaten the reign of John Stephenson's Cardinals.

Liverpool's chances have undoubtedly been hurt by the loss of Gary Ice, last year's OVAC 138-pound champion who is ineligible, according to Coach Nick Trombeta. The Potlars boasted four individual titlists in '66 but only one of those is again available. That's Mark Emmerling, who won in the 98-pound class as a freshman last year and who is defending at that weight.

Other 1966 titlists trying to achieve further honors are Bridgeport's unbeaten strong boy, Mike Vargo, who was both an OVAC and Ohio champion at 135 pounds last year, and Cadiz's Paul Coffland, who has moved up from 132 to 155.

Vargo, Emmerling, and Coffland are top seeded at their respective weights. The other top seeds are Wheeling Park senior Chance Taylor, who suffered his only loss of last season at the OVAC tourney and who went on to become a state titlist at 105 but who is a question mark for this event because of a head-neck injury; Reed Case, Cadiz sophomore at 112 and a state titlist at 98 pounds in '66; Ray Betteridge, East Liverpool sophomore at 119; Darren Delande, St. Clairsville senior at 126; Bridgeport junior Dean Burk, at 132; Donyasha Yetts, of Steubenville, who is competing at 138 where he was runnerup last year when a mere freshman; Vinnie Monseau, 1966 W. Va. state 138-pound kingpin now at 145; junior Rich Hurlenski, Bridgeport, at 167; junior Dan Keenan, Steubenville, at 175; and John Marshall's unbeaten heavyweight, Alex Shook.

In addition to Liverpool and Cadiz, defending divisional team

champions are Meadowbrook, in triple-A, and Beallsville, in single-A. Cadiz, which won the over-all championship in 1961, has 10 wrestlers who are seeded in the top eight in their respective weight classes. Steubenville has nine. Liverpool and Bridgeport eight each; Wheeling Park and Bellaire, seven apiece; Meadowbrook six, and St. Clairsville five.

The tourney will be a double-elimination event, for all wrestlers except those onsted in preliminary bouts. The second session will be at 2 p.m. on Thursday, with quarter-finals at 8 p.m. There will be consolation bouts at every session except the first one.

The semi-finals will be on Saturday afternoon, starting at 1 p.m. The seventh-eighth place matches will be at 6 p.m. on Saturday, followed by special ceremonies that will include a procession of the wrestlers who will vie that night for spots in the top six in the 13 weight classes; presentation of an array of special awards; introduction of the OVAC 1967 champions who have returned for their reunion; and "The Star Spangled Banner" by the Wheeling Park High Young Patriots.

The showdowns which will determine the top six matmen in each weight class are slated to begin at 7 p.m. Saturday. Three mats will be in use.

Ron Mauck, former Brooke High coach, is tournament manager, as he has been since the OVAC mat extravaganza was moved from St. John's Arena at Steubenville to Wheeling in 1979. Bill Hinegardner, who coached four OVAC champion teams at John Marshall, is assistant tourney director.

A total of 12 referees will work tournament bouts. Trophies and plaques for the tourney have been provided by McDonald's, through the generosity of Al "Lefty" Didriksen, owner of four McDonald's Restaurants in the local area.

Single session admission is \$4 for adults and \$2 for students but a book of tickets good for all five sessions will be sold tonight for \$12 for adults and \$5 for students.