

Gymnasts Open at Mass.

Wettstone Starts 28th Year With Inexperienced Team

By LEW THOMPSON
Assistant Sports Editor

Every New Year is an equal combination of nostalgia and resolutions, and that is especially true in 1966 for Penn State gymnastic coach Gene Wettstone.

1965 was a year of great moments for Wettstone.

His Lion squad captured Penn State's eighth outright NCAA national title, the most by any school or coach, by defeating the Huskies of the University of Washington at Carbondale, Ill., in April.

Mike Jacobson won the national college all-around crown at the championship meet.

En route to the NCAA's Lion sophomore Steve Cohen won the all-around crown at the Eastern Regional meet, the fourteenth consecutive year that a Wettstone-coached Nittany Lion has taken that title.

Yes, 1965 was a great year for Gene Wettstone. He called that national champion squad his "best team ever at Penn State," and that statement covers a lot of years and a lot of teams.

But Old Father Time stands still for no one, even for the dean of American gymnastic coaches, so the New Year finds coach Wettstone in the position of having to make some resolutions about this year's team.

The NCAA title meet will be held at Rec Hall this season, on April 1-2, and Wettstone would like to be a coach at that



JACOBSON

... missing from meet as well as a host

A revised NCAA team title format will have 12 teams fighting it out for the championship, instead of just two, as it was last year. The four areas of the nation, East, Mid-East, Mid-West and Far West, will each be represented by three teams at the meet, but Wettstone believes that the Nittany Lions will have to struggle to nab one of the eastern spots.

"We'll have a battle on our hands from Temple, Springfield and Syracuse to win one of the three positions in the East," he said.

Wettstone expects trouble because of the attrition time, in

the form of graduation, has caused to that fine 1965 squad.

Among the 1965 heroes missing this year are Jacobson and multiple-event men Pete Saponaro and Jim Culhane, so the "non-" business problem, according to Wettstone, will be death.

"Last year we had three or four good men in each event," he noted, "but this year we have only two, with a few exceptions."

The "two" Wettstone referred to are Cohen, now an experienced junior, and team captain Ed Isabelle, a senior from Springfield, Mass., who has been one of the top five collegiate all-around men in the country for the past two seasons but who has labored in the shadow of Jacobson and Cohen.

Beyond this pair, however, except for specialists like Doug Collins, Dennis Paoletti, Gene Schofield and Gary Williams, experience is hard to come by. Normally, a little inexperience would not be hard to swallow, but then 1966 isn't going to be a normal year, at least in the rulebook.

The NCAA gymnastic rules were changed after the 1965 campaign, but unfortunately for the Lions, the changes hit the team where it hurts most—the lack of experience in the ranks.

According to the new regulations, each team may enter four men in each event, as long as one man, the all-



CULHANE

... 1965 team

around competitor, is entered in all seven events.

A second man may enter an unlimited number of events, so the Lions are well set in those two slots with Cohen and Isabelle, or Isabelle and Cohen—whichever way Wettstone decides to use them.

Providing that good fourth man in every event is what will bolster the Lions this season, because of the scarcity of talent and experience throughout the entire team.

This year the fourth man will be very important, too, because of the revision in the NCAA scoring system. Previously points were awarded

according to order of finish on a 6-1-3-2-1 basis.

In 1966, a team's score for a single event will be the total of the points earned by the top three men of that team. Thus, if three competitors from a team score 9.0, 9.0 and 8.0, respectively, for an event, the team's total for that event is 26 points.

In Wettstone's opinion, this rule change places a premium on depth. "It is essential that you have four good men in each event to provide a margin of safety if one man messes up his routine," he said.

Although the alterations of the rules have hurt his team's chances a bit, Wettstone feels that the schedule has given the Lions a break.

The Nittany gymnasts open Wettstone's twenty-eighth year at the Penn State coaching helm against the University of Massachusetts at Amherst tomorrow.

"Opening against Massachusetts, we are very fortunate," Wettstone remarked, "because they are not a strong team. I don't mean to say they are weak, but they're certainly not as powerful as Springfield, whom we face the following week."

On the season, the Redmen are 1-1, with a 153.75-148.48 win over Pitt and a 169.85-154.22 loss at the hands of Army. Although the Lions tomahawked the Redmen last year in a 93-25 Rec Hall massacre, Wettstone expects an "improved showup" from the host squad, since Massachusetts has all its 1965 starters returning.

He added, apprehensively, that the Lions "are not quite ready for stiff competition," since the month-long Christ-



ED ISABELLE
... load-carrying captain

mas layoff may have dulled their physical and emotional sharpness.

Wettstone knows that he still has a few horses in his stable, so the Redmen don't really have him worried. It's Springfield, Temple and Syracuse he worries about most.

Even then, he admits, "Cohen and Isabelle will carry the load."

Perhaps all the way to Rec Hall on April 1.

The schedule:
Jan. 8—at Massachusetts
15—Springfield
22—at Army
28—at Pitt
Feb. 5—Navy
12—Syracuse
19—at Temple

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Five Sophomores To Start

Wrestlers at Lehigh Tomorrow

When you have a wrestling team loaded with sophomores and your opening meet is with Lehigh at Grace Hall, it's roughly similar to being third runnerup on Ted Mack and making your professional debut at the Met. In other words, things aren't exactly in your favor.

It just so happens that Bill Koll, Penn State's wrestling coach, has a team with five sophomores and he opens tomorrow night against Lehigh at Grace Hall. But Koll doesn't feel things are that much against him.

"We're certainly not making the trip with the intention of losing," he said yesterday afternoon. "I know Lehigh is tough and it will be a real test for the sophomores, wrestling their first varsity meet in that place. But we can do all right."

was referring to is, of course, Grace Hall. And meeting the Engineers in that place is wrestling's version of facing St. Joe's in the Palestra.

Fans Unnerving
Lehigh fans are, to put it calmly, fairly high-strung in regard to the fate of their grapplers. And they have been known to voice their sentiments in rather loud fashion.

They also like to see their wrestling close up—the nearer the mat the better. So if you can envision a few thousand people squashed into an area about the size of the ticket booth at the Cathaum, all breathing down your neck and shouting in your ear, you've got the perfect description of Grace Hall. It's murder.

And so is Lehigh's wrestling team. Led by Little Mike Caruso, the national champ at

123 and Billy Stewart, who holds similar honors at 137, the Engineers have run up a record of 3-1. They've beaten Cornell, Syracuse and Yale, losing only to perennial powerhouse Oklahoma.

Just the fact that Lehigh has wrestled four matches to the Lion's none gives them a tremendous advantage. The fact that a roundup of State's roster looks an awful lot like last year's freshman lineup may give them another advantage. Only time will tell.

Two Veterans
Koll does have a couple of veterans in co-captains Jerry Seaman and Ellery Seitz, who will go at 160 and heavy-weight respectively. Both got off to slow starts last year. Seitz due to a broken arm and Seaman due to being pressed into service in the heavier weights, but both were strong in the stretch run. Seaman

came on to finish with a 6-3 record and Seitz was 3-5-1 with a fourth place finish in the Easterns.

Beyond those two, the experience stretches a little thin. Joe Eromus has seen a lot of action and Dick DeWalt is talented, though erratic, but these two are in the same weight class, so only one will see action tomorrow.

The five sophomores who will start—Wally Clark at 123, Tom Hostetter at 130, Vito Fitz at 137, Dave Spinda at 145 and Rich Lorenzo at 150—all showed a world of promise last season. State had one of its best freshman teams in its history. But Lehigh is no freshman team.

Even so, Koll insists that this year's team should be better than last year's. "We've got better balance," he says. "And we'll improve."

—By Alex Ward

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