

1st 'USA Championship' opens



Photo by Joe Rudick

Marshall Avener leaving Rec Hall

By MARK SIMENSON
Assistant Sports Editor

Following a poor 10th-place showing by its men at the 1972 Olympics, the United States Gymnastic Federation sought out an idea that would help

Quick facts

The first annual "Championship of the USA" at a glance
Place: Rec Hall
Time: Compulsories tonight 7 p.m., optionals tomorrow 1 p.m., in individual finals tomorrow 8 p.m.
Teams: East - Marshall Avener, PSU, Mike Carter, LSU, John Crosby, SCSC, Jim Culhane, NYAC, Mel Hill, Temple, Jay Whelan, SCSC, all Gene Whelan, Mass.
Midwest - Randy Bathorn, MSU, Dave Butzman, Ray Gura, Mich, Ted Marli, Gary Morava, SU, Chuck Wanner, Ill all Jeff Rock, Minn.
Midwest - Jim Ivceik, MU, Jim Stephenson, ISU, Mark Graham, ISU, Doug Fitzjarrell, ISU, Bob Roth, ISU, Carl Walin, Iowa, all Dave Repp, NMU.
West - Clarke Johnson, Cal, Steve Posner, Cal, Gordon Jones, UW, Jim Messina, UA, Ron Nissen, Port St. Joe Sweeney, SJS, all Bill Barnwell, SJS.
Admission: Tickets for the three sessions are \$2. A special \$1 rate is available for Penn State students wishing to attend one session.

rejuvenate the American gymnastic program.

What developed was the "Championship of the USA," a meet that pits the top six gymnasts from each of the

four regions in compulsory and optional exercises for the six Olympic events.

The USGF, which unveils the Championship tonight at Rec Hall, plans to use the meet as a yardstick for measuring talent for upcoming international competition.

After tomorrow afternoon's optionals conclude the all-around race, the USGF will name the four-man squad to face China in New York later this month.

The Championship also acts as a qualifying and selecting meet for the National Team that faces Bulgaria in June, the Maccabiach Games in Tel Aviv in July and the World University Games in Moscow in August.

The last phase of the Championship determines a ranking for American gymnasts. The first 15 all-around finishers comprise the Elite 15, a new category of national honors.

The meet brings together the finest gymnasts in the country, with three Olympians and 11 of the top 15 all-arounders at the NCAA championships last month.

Penn State Olympian Marshall Avener, who tied Stanford's Steve Hug as the top gymnast at the Nationals with a 110.05 compulsory-

optional total, rates as a good bet to take the all-around title because Hug is skipping the meet. Hug is a photography major and has taken his camera and gone into



seclusion for this semester's work.

At NCAAs Avener enjoyed a two point edge over Southern Illinois' Gary Morava, who placed third, Louisiana State junior Mike Carter edged John Crosby of SCConn by five one-hundredths of a point for the fourth spot.

Avener, Carter and Crosby are members of the East, while Morava leads the Midwest. The Midwest has four gymnasts who placed in the top 11 spots at the Nationals. New Mexico's Jim Ivceik (6) is joined by three Iowa Staters in Jim Stephenson (8), Doug Fitzjarrell (9), and Mark Graham (11).

Jim Culhane earned a spot on the East team on the strength of his third place at the Amateur Athletic Union tourney last weekend.

Culhane, who graduated from Penn State in 1966, was fourth on the American team at Munich.

With the meet coming a month after the Nationals, whichever gymnast comes

into Rec Hall in the best shape could win it.

Culhane says being in shape is important, but adds, "There's a lot of luck involved."

The all-around battle should center around Avener, Crosby, Carter, Culhane, Ivceik, Morava and Stephenson.

Tonight's compulsories could decide the team

championship, because most of the gymnasts have top rate optional routines.

"In many ways they (the compulsories) are the truest test of a gymnast's ability," says meet director Gene Wettstone.

Wettstone, a two-time coach of the U.S. Olympic team and head of this country's Olympic development program, says the American gymnasts need to perfect their compulsory exercises.

"Americans have always fallen behind in the compulsory exercises," he points out. "Our temperament is more suited to the freedom and individuality of the optional exercises."

Compulsory exercises are designed by the Technical Committee of the International Gymnastics

Federation (FIG) and are used for four years. They will be changed again next year for the World Games.

"The compulsory routines do not allow a gymnast to hide his weaknesses. He has to face them and overcome them to succeed," he says. "The compulsories impose a certain amount of discipline on the gymnasts so they never lose sight of the purpose and style of international style and learning."

In the optionals tomorrow afternoon, the routines with the most flair and originality should score well with the judges.

When the optionals are completed, those scores are averaged with the compulsories and the top six in each event advance to the individual finals tomorrow night.



Photo by Randy J. Woodbury

John Maier (24) is in Chuck Medlar's weekend strategy

Lion nine guns for Owls, Hens

RICK STARR
Assistant Sports Editor

"It's always difficult to repeat after you have had a season like we had last year," Temple baseball coach Jim Wilson said, reflecting on last year's 33-15 season, which included a trip to Omaha for the College World Series. The Owls finished third in the nation last year, behind two perennial college baseball powerhouses, Southern Cal and Arizona State.

Wilson's team apparently hasn't heard his words, as it works through a 42-game schedule at a 750 winning percentage. The Owls are currently 21-7 and, along with Delaware, they comprise the competition for the Lion nine this weekend.

Lion hurler Mitch Lukevics will be on the mound for this afternoon's 3:30 p.m. game with Delaware. Like

Temple, the Blue Hens are locked in a battle for their conference title with Lafayette at present, but wouldn't mind knocking off the Lions.

The Owls will get a chance to get by Drexel once and for all in their conference battle when the two meet tomorrow on Temple's home field.

Then the following day, the Owls travel to Penn State for a 1 p.m. doubleheader at Beaver Field.

Wilson said he is confident that his pitching staff can handle the test. The fact that his top three hurlers have a combined record of 13-1 just might have something to do with that.

"We have nine good college pitchers so we feel we're pretty deep on the mound," he said.

Righthander Rich Huges heads the Owl mound crew with a 5-0 record and a 1.17 era. He is backed up by Rich

Casale (5-1), Dave Chapman (3-0).

Lion lefthander Brian Masella probably will start the first game of Sunday's doubleheader and, provided he's not called upon for relief work, righthander John Maier should start the second. Lion coach Chuck Medlar said he'll use Maier today or in Sunday's first game if the need arises. In that event, Rick Sherkel or Steve Correll will step into his starting role.

"The first thing I'm worried about is Friday's game and we'll use everything we have to win that one," Medlar said. "We'll do the same for the first game of the Temple doubleheader. The only thing you can do is approach these games one at a time."

Temple didn't get to Omaha last year by pitching alone. The Owls

world series roster included four hitters with averages better than .312. According to Wilson, this year's team is better.

Part of the reason is team captain and catcher Jack Dom. The Owl senior has a .368 average and 22 runs batted in at present.

Outfielder Earle Chew, Dom's co-captain, is close behind him with 19 RBIs and a .333 average.

Medlar, uninterested in any tournament talk at the present time, said that while the weekend's contests were very important, they were not yet crucial. Penn State still has nine games remaining plus some make-up games not yet rescheduled.

"We still have a long way to go," Medlar said, "but we're approaching these games the way we always do. We'll go out and do the best we can."



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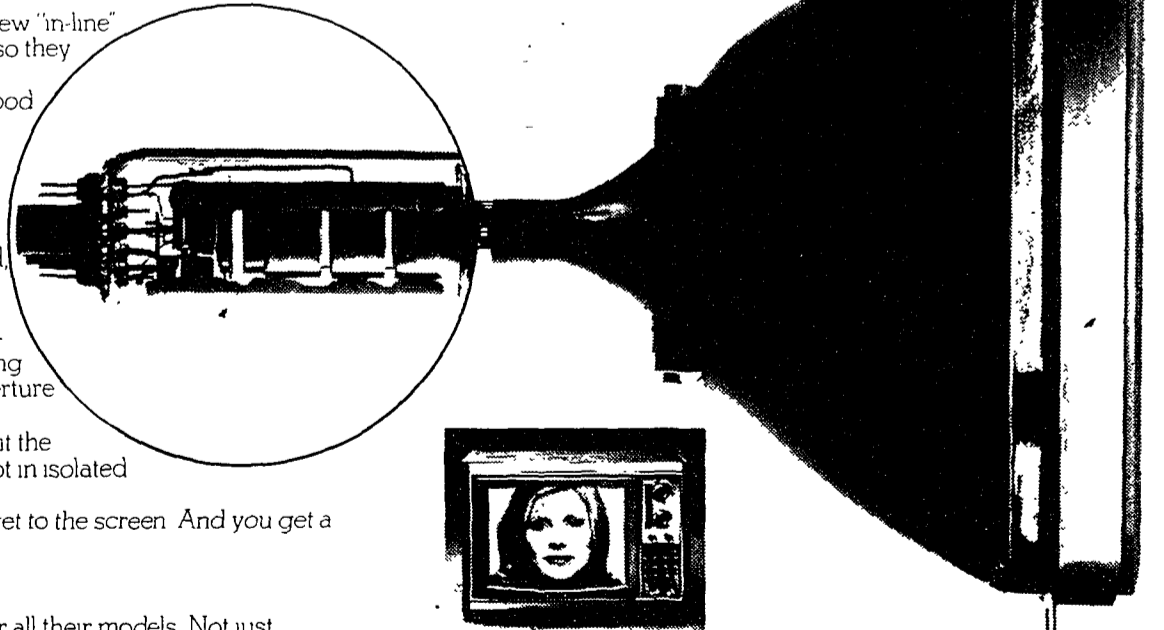
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