

Wrestlers preparing for day-long open tournament

By Mike Still
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

With more than 400 expected competitors from all over the country, an early-morning start with non-stop, and marathon wrestling to follow, Sunday will be a long day at Rec Hall.

WRESTLING

The No. 5 Penn State wrestling team will host the Nittany Lion Open this Sunday, with action starting at 8:30 a.m. on Penn State's home mats at Rec Hall.

One of the largest college wrestling events of the year, the Lions will see some of the country's best competition on Sunday in matches that will test their physical fitness and endurance.

"It's definitely hectic," heavy-weight Cameron Wade said. "You just have to go out there and be ready, always be warm and just be ready to wrestle."

As an open event, no team

scores will be kept throughout the day and will feature both attached and unattached wrestlers from many schools.

The final list of competitors is subject to change up until match time, but coach Cael Sanderson expects 17 attached and 13 unattached Nittany Lions to compete on Sunday.

This list includes junior All-American Frank Molinaro, the No. 2-ranked 149-pounder in the country who will continue his comeback after sitting out the Lions' first four dual meets of the season with a broken ankle suffered in the off-season.

Molinaro competed against then-No. 24 Rutgers at the Sprawl and Brawl duals on Nov. 21, defeating No. 11 Mario Mason 4-3.

"He's ready to go now and should have no problem," Sanderson said of Molinaro.

"But we'll take it one match at a time."

Also, the list of different teams that will travel to University Park

can also change up until Sunday morning, but a handful of nationally ranked squads are expected to make the trek.

Central Michigan, Virginia Tech, Hofstra, Pittsburgh, Lehigh and Rutgers — all top-25 teams — are likely to send wrestlers to the Open and will pose difficult challenges to the Lions.

Penn State has already defeated both Lehigh and Rutgers this season, taking down the Mountain Hawks on Nov. 12 and the Scarlet Knights and the Sprawl and Brawl duals.

But the atmosphere of Sunday's meet will undoubtedly be different this time around, as each man will be wrestling on his own throughout the day in potentially numerous matches.

"You definitely still want your teammates to win," Wade said. "But you're not gonna be there to cheer for them and that kind of stuff."

"So you just have to go out there and wrestle for yourself."

Senior Brad Pataky, who is still nursing a left knee sprain, won't be able to compete in the Open Sunday.

But as one of the most experienced wrestlers on the squad Pataky will do what he can to help his teammates during the long, difficult day, offering any advice he can give.

"One of the important factors of

coming into a tournament like this is just taking it one match at a time, like it's any other day," Pataky said.

"It's early but everybody is feeling the same, so just knowing that going out and giving your best effort will hope you get the best results."

To e-mail reporter: mas5860@psu.edu



Sarah Finnegan/Collegian

Quentin Wright (bottom) wrestles during the Nittany Lions' media day. Wright and his teammates will take part in the Nittany Lion Open Sunday.

Purple Eagles eyeing unlikely upset in NCAA tournament

By Emily Kaplan
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Scott Pennewill said there's a chance Niagara can pull off a monumental upset tonight when it faces No. 8 Penn State in the first round of the NCAA women's volleyball tournament — and that chance depends on two very big "ifs."

WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL

"Well first, Niagara would have to play a perfect match," said Pennewill, coach of the Loyola Maryland women's volleyball team.

"And Penn State would have to play the worst match in the existence of their program."

While Pennewill said he, and the rest of the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC), will be rooting for the underdog, he sees the

reality of the first-round matchup at Rec Hall.

And he knows an upset is unlikely.

Niagara — a small liberal arts university nestled less than five miles away from the New York-Canada border — has just five players on its entire roster taller than 6-foot.

The Nittany Lions, meanwhile, are the three-time defending national champions. Their roster features four starters who are taller than 6-foot-3.

"When a team from our conference plays a team in the Big Ten, the Pac-10, the Big 12, there's obviously going to be a physical mismatch," said Marist coach Tom Hanna, whose team also competes in the MAAC. "That's just the way it is."

Pennewill has seen that firsthand. His Greyhounds faced Penn

State in a preseason tournament last year.

Pennewill said he saw three main differences between the Lions and teams from the MAAC: Penn State is simply bigger, stronger and faster.

"It's something we talk about when we're recruiting," Pennewill said. "You talk about whether kids are ready to make the jump from high school to college. Then in Division I alone, there are different levels. And Penn State is at a different caliber."

The Purple Eagles (25-8) — who earned their conference's automatic berth with a sweep of Iona in the 2010 MAAC championship — are making just their second-

ever trip to the NCAA tournament. Niagara faced another Big Ten opponent, Michigan, in last season's first round.

The Wolverines won in straight sets.

Penn State (26-5) just clinched its eighth consecutive Big Ten championship.

The Lions are looking to set an NCAA volleyball record tonight with their 91st consecutive win at home.

Hanna said while Penn State has the obvious advantage on paper, there is one thing that he saw in the regular season that could benefit the Purple Eagles.

"People are as tall as they are, people are as big as they are, people have as quick of an arm swing as they do," Hanna said. "And you can't change that between now and the match. But the Niagara team is as mentally tough as any team I've seen, so hopefully that

will help with the physical differences between them and Penn State." "These matches are played for a reason."

Lions senior co-captain Alyssa D'Errico said she knows the Purple Eagles will give Penn State as much of a fight that they have in them. That's just the do-or-die nature of postseason collegiate volleyball.

But the Lions will be ready. They're not overlooking anyone.

"We don't want to be that story that gets released on the Monday after the first weekend of NCAAs about which No. 1 seed got upset in the first round or the second round," D'Errico said.

"We don't want to be that team. We don't want to end our season like that on an unfocused night where we just overlook our opponent."

To e-mail reporter: exk5049@psu.edu

This is HOCKEY VALLEY

Friday, Dec. 3 @ 9:00 pm
Favorite Jersey Night

VS. DELAWARE

Saturday, Dec. 4 @ 3:30 pm
Third Jersey Auction
bid on your favorite player's jersey during the game!

\$5 students / \$7.50 adults Advanced tickets available @ rink or call (814) 863-2037

KNOCK, KNOCK.
WHO'S THERE?
GLADYS.
GLADYS WHO?
GLADYS
THANKSGIVING.
AREN'T YOU?

SPA LATENIGHT PRESENTS
MIKE SUPER

8:00 PM AT RECREATION HALL

THANK PENN STATE

Make your gift today at
www.SeniorClassGift.psu.edu

PENN STATE Forever
PSUSeniors.com

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 3RD, 2010.
ADMISSION IS FREE WITH PSU ID

Love the Greater Philly Area?

Check out The Daily Collegian's Classified section or online for today's listing of employment opportunities, real estate, and cars in the Greater Philly Area!