

A change in store?

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that I was out of shape.

"I worked out constantly," he said. "I was lifting weights, running and exercising to stay in shape."

After only three matches at the trials, Thacker was eliminated from the competition -- not as a result of defeats, but through a technicality.

"No one beat me. I got disqualified twice," said Thacker, who, by virtue of the two disqualifications, was scratched from the finals.

"It would have been one thing if someone had beaten me," he said. "But to lose because the judges thought I was stalling is hard to take. Anyone who has ever seen me wrestle knows that I don't wrestle fast. I beat the first guy I wrestled 12-0, and five of the six guys there I had beaten at least four times."

In addition, Thacker had earlier in the year defeated the then-number-two-ranked Russian, Megadof Megadofgov, who is now the Soviet Union's premier heavyweight wrestler.

Since his appearance at the Olympic Trials, Thacker has immersed himself in other projects, trying to put the experience behind him. Though he wishes he'd have gotten his chance to go for the gold in Los Angeles, there are other challenges to be met.

"It really hurt me at first, not getting to go to the Olympics. Competing in the Olympics is something I was really looking forward to doing," said the articulate criminal justice major who attends North Carolina State.

The way things look now, Thacker may never have an opportunity to compete in the Olympics. Just recently, the International Olympic Committee passed the "286 Rule" for heavyweight wrestlers that will be enforced starting with the 1988 Games. According to that rule, any wrestler who weighs more than 286 pounds can not compete in the Olympics.

Thacker and several coaches feel the rule was designed specifically to bar him from further competition.

"I think the rule was made to keep me out of the Olympics in '88," said Thacker. "I've gotten CBS and Sports Illustrated behind me, so there's still a

chance that I'll be able to wrestle in the next Olympics."

Even if he doesn't have the opportunity to be an Olympian, Thacker says, his NCAA crown will help him advance his career.

"There are a lot of other things opening up to me as a result of me playing in the movie (which is scheduled to be released in December)," he said. "I've gotten an agent and he's been getting some offers for me to do commercials and movies."

Yet, Thacker said he has not decided to cast his lot with anybody or anything yet. Football season's coming up.

"I've been talking to (Head Football) Coach (Tom) Reed about the possibility of playing football," said Thacker, a fifth-year senior who still has one season of eligibility left for football. "It's been going on for quite a while now and the alumni and fans of State have been writing expressing that they would like for me to be on the football team this fall."

"I'm on a diet and have been working out," said Thacker, who has lost some 35 pounds within the last two months. "I'm a lot quicker now, so I think I would be ready to play football."

With fall football practice approaching rapidly, Thacker knows he doesn't have long until he'll be forced to make a decision. He's been weighing both sides, he said, and the final decision will be his and won't come through anyone else's prodding.

"I want to do what is best for me at this time," he said.

"Right now there's a demand for me to do commercials and movies. In that business you have to hop on the opportunity when you're hot. I don't want to pass up something and be sorry for it later. That's why I want to be sure before I decide either way."

Whether he chooses to play collegiate football this fall or not, Thacker said he still might be back on the gridiron.

"There's a possibility that I will give pro football a try," he said. "The desire to play football is still there and I think I can do well in whatever I choose to pursue. I think I have the ability to change over and excel at other things."

Breakers take title

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team concept. I've seen a lot of positive things come out of the league.

"Having the best players in the city has made the best come out in the other players. From my standpoint, I think we've put together a real good program."

Hentz and the summer league players will have the opportunity to find out just how good they are this week when an all-star team from the league takes on a team of former summer leaguers.

"We have a bunch of guys that are going to really test us," says Hentz. "But I think our young men will be ready to play and I

expect to see us play a real good game."

Among the former Carver league players will be Tobe Jackson, Sydney Wilkins and Vincent Brown. Former Pfeiffer standout Mike Epps also will play.

The alumni team, which will be coached by ex-Harlem Globetrotter Robert Little, will, says Hentz, give the younger players valuable experience.

"Seven of the 14 all-stars on the team will be going to high school this fall," Hentz says. "They're the ones that have the most to gain from playing against

the older players."

Among his all-star performers, Hentz says he has some outstanding athletes.

"Kenny Mickens is a blue-chip athlete who should have an outstanding season this year," says Hentz. "Another young player who has shown good skills is Brian Howard. In Bay Shaw, I think we have an excellent point guard."

Other performers on the summer league all-star roster are Brian Leak, Terry Gwynn, Ron Cauthon, Robert McIlwaine, Terry Gunter, Jeff Patton, Doug Owl, William Tatum and Anthony Sides.

Rampaging Indians

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"We're going to be going up against the finest players in the country," he said. "Most of the teams we'll see out there are sponsored by major corporations and have the top college ballplayers on their teams. For us to do well, we have to be at the top of our game and be mentally and physically ready."

Wilkins said his team has been looking forward to a return trip to Wichita all season.

"I knew what kind of team we

had all season," he said. "We played a lot of players and gave all of our pitchers experience so that we'd be ready when the time came."

"I want to go out there with a team that Winston-Salem and the state of North Carolina can be proud of, and I think we have that."

While Wilkins believes his team will fare well against top-flight competition, he said he'd

be pleased with two good showings.

"If we can only win two games, we'll have done better than any team from North Carolina has ever done," he said. "There have been a lot of teams from Winston-Salem fighting to get to Wichita over the last 60 years and we're the only one that has made it. By winning at least two games, I think we will have represented the people very well."

Black College Sports

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media's imagination, it was Gerry Cooney. Here is a man who made \$10 million for fighting the heavyweight championship when he should have been paying his dues like black fighters have to.

The raw truth about Cooney is that he does not want to be a fighter. He is said to have cleared more than \$2 million after taxes for the fight with Holmes, enough to place him on easy street for the rest of his life.

Cooney should do just that. He should get out of the fight game and leave the money for those who have earned their way to the top by fighting real contenders. Cooney got there by beating up on no-names and washed-up veterans. He should quit while he is ahead.

Black Schools Ponder Return To Division II

Somewhere out there, former Tennessee State Athletic Director Samuel Whitman is saying "I told you so."

Several years ago, when Tennessee State thumbed its nose at the NCAA's Division I-AA and applied to join the big boys in Division I-A, Whitman boldly predicted that Division I-AA would soon be relegated to Division II status.

Of course, all this alphabet soup can be confusing, so let us explain. Truly big-time football teams like Notre Dame and Southern California belong to I-A. Smaller schools such as Grambling and Jackson State are in I-AA. Still smaller schools

(Valdosta State, Morris Brown) are members of Division II.

Though it tried mightily, Tennessee State could not make it in I-A and is now in I-AA. Now, like a lot of other I-AA schools, it may be forced back to Division II.

The reason is television. Because of the Supreme Court's decision recently that likely will prohibit small schools from appearing on television, there is no longer any reason for them to go through the added expense of being in Division I-AA. After all, the lure of TV dollars was the only reason they moved up, anyway.

Now, this column has learned, at least three black colleges are pondering moves back to Division II.

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