

Wrestlers underdogs in ACC

By GEOFFREY MOCK
Assistant Sports Editor

After two years of having every other team in the Atlantic Coast Conference aiming to knock it from the top, the North Carolina wrestling team finds the roles reversed as it looks for some outside help to upset favored N.C. State and win its third straight ACC wrestling tournament.

State is a heavy favorite in the two-day tournament starting Saturday in Charlottesville, Va., but Tar Heel coach Bill Lam said the nationally-ranked Wolfpack is no sure bet.

"We can't win by ourselves," Lam said. "We need some help. Three years ago we should have won it. We had nine wrestlers in the semi-finals but everyone that was capable of winning lost and we only had three in the finals. We lost then and it can happen to State this year."

The Wolfpack easily swept through the ACC regular season, defeating the second-place Tar Heels twice by

20 points or more, but any of three teams could surprise State if it slips.

"We're going in as underdogs," said Harry Barnabac, who will be wrestling in his first ACC tournament at 134 pounds. "State's not looking forward to giving us a shot. It's a good situation to be in. State has not gone into the tournament with a lot of pressure on them the last two years."

Realistically, however, Lam said he is shooting for a second place finish. "If we don't win it, I hope we stay in there for second," he said. "We beat Duke and Clemson by one point and the win over Maryland was closer than the score (27-9) indicated. Things could get tight and we could drop to fourth, but the kids are thinking like winners, which I like very much."

Leading the Tar Heels will be defending champions Dave Cooke at 126 pounds and Jan Michaels, who will drop to 158 pounds after wrestling at 167 for most of the year. Lam said heavyweight Jack Parry and freshmen Bill Gaffney and Robert Shriner could also contend for titles.

Lam said that as with last year when the Tar Heels

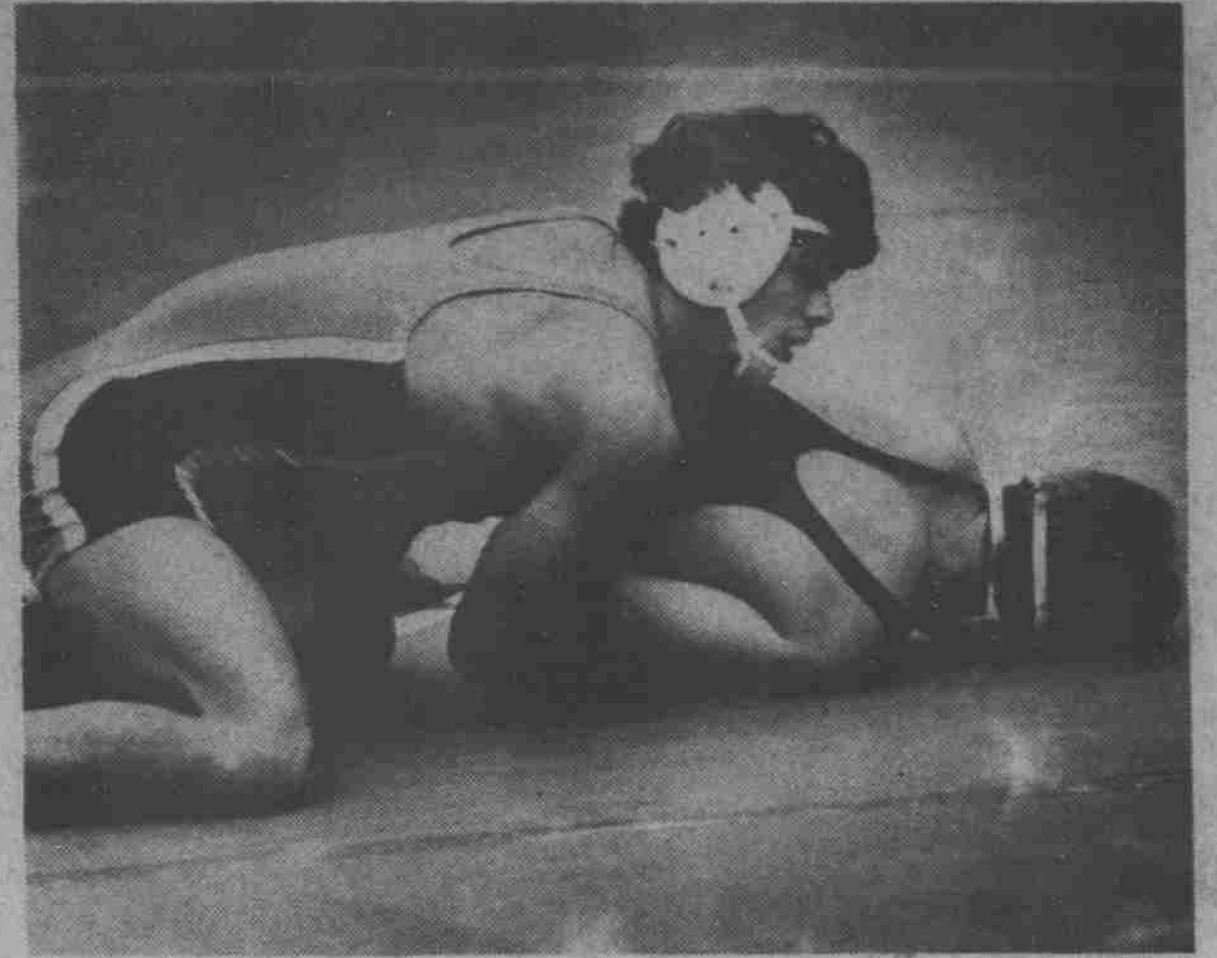
had three champions but won by only half a point, the deciding factor may be the lower spots. "The fights for third and fourth will make the difference. Placement points will be very important," he said.

Some lineup changes were made by Lam for the tournament, the most important being the drop of Gaffney to 150 pounds and Michaels to 158. That was the weight that Michaels won last year, but he will be tested by Maryland's Kevin Colabucci, last year's winner of the tournament's Most Valuable Wrestler award.

The tournament is also important for qualifying for the NCAA tournament March 12-14 in Princeton, N.J. The ACC will send 15 wrestlers to the NCAA tournament with all ten weight class champions plus five at-large wrestlers getting bids.

"Guys like Cooke and Michaels are definitely looking to the NCAA," Lam said. "The rest are hoping to do the best they can in the tournament and hope that it's good enough to get a bid."

The quarterfinals will be Saturday afternoon with the semifinals that night. The championships and consolation finals are scheduled for Sunday afternoon.



Co-captain Dave Cooke leads Heel wrestlers into tournament ...junior is expected to defend his 126-pound crown

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- Men's swimming at the ACC Tournament at Clemson
- Men's lacrosse vs. Maryland lacrosse club 1 p.m. Saturday on Fetzer Field
- Women's swimming at the New South Invitational at Duke

Women beat ASU by 34

The Carolina Gymnastics team competes in the NCAA Championships Saturday at East Carolina. They will face state rivals N.C. State, East Carolina, Western Carolina and Duke in Greenville.

"Duke is definitely our hardest competition," freshman Karen Kaiser said. During the regular season, Carolina defeated all of its in-state competition, but Duke nearly ruined that record. Carolina edged Duke 130.60 to 129.25.

A victory over WCU last Friday enabled Carolina to finish its regular season with a 7-3 record. Kaiser captured first place in the all-around against WCU, making it the sixth time this year she has won this honor.

The next step after the state meet is the AIAW Region II Championships, which will be hosted in Carmichael Auditorium March 26-28.

In order to advance to the regionals, a team will have to score better than 124 points this Saturday. The Heels should not have difficulty since they scored below the 124 mark only twice this year.

"It's going to be close," junior Diana Cates said about the meet. "We know we can win if we can hit."

Cates will perform in the all-around Saturday along with teammates Tiffany Terranova, Michelle Robinson and Kaiser. — JACKIE BLACKBURN

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