

southern connecticut

Owls should find more success against big boys

By MARK STEWART
Of the Emerald

Southern Connecticut — the next NCAA gymnastics champion?

Don't laugh, it could happen. While some might tend to equate Southern Connecticut with our own Southern Oregon State College, coach Abie Grossfeld in the past 15 years has built Southern Connecticut into a perennial contender for the NCAA gymnastics title, first in Division II and now in Division I.

Southern Connecticut is a Division II school in every sport but one — gymnastics. Grossfeld's teams in 1973, 1975, and 1976 won Division II team titles and took third last year when Southern Connecticut moved up to Division I competition. The school gives no scholarships to athletes.

Grossfeld's credentials are quite impressive — three-time National Coach of the Year; eight out of the last 10 years he has been the Eastern Coach of the Year; coach of the 1972 Olympic team in Munich; competed in two Olympics (1956, 1960) — and he has produced results.

Grossfeld-coached Peter Kormann won a bronze medal in floor exercise in the 1976 Olympics, the first American to capture an Olympic medal in gymnastics in the last 44 years.

Southern Connecticut qualified for the NCAA meet with a score of 430.65, which was best in the Eastern Intercollegiate Gymnastics League and third best in the country, and the fourth year in a row that SCSC has won the EIGL.



Photo courtesy Rick Leddy/SCSC

Mario McCutcheon won the Eastern Intercollegiate all-around and is one of the national favorites.

Over the season SCSC beat Cornell, Navy, Springfield, Syracuse, Army, Temple, and Massachusetts, losing only to Penn State by one point.

Southern Connecticut escaped the season without any major injuries, according to Grossfeld.

"We've had a number of minor injuries," said Grossfeld in a telephone interview. "Some of the low scores in duals were because of injuries."

Right now Grossfeld has what is probably the team's worst injury problem of the season on his hands.

Wallace Miller injured his shoulder on his dismount in the still rings at the Penn State meet when a hand guard slipped. According to Grossfeld, the loss of all-arounder Miller cost SCSC the meet. Miller will make the trip to the meet, however.

Another all-arounder, Glen Barletta, has had the flu and was going to be tested for mononucleosis, but Grossfeld was optimistic that

Barletta's tests would prove negative.

However, despite the injury and illness problems, Grossfeld is optimistic about his chances for the NCAA title which will be on the line this weekend.

"We have a chance to win," said Grossfeld. "Oregon qualified with a very high score. Oklahoma is the defending champ and has the same personnel as last year. Stats show they did well. I understand Arizona State scored 433 and that's very high. A lot of us are even. Minnesota scored 423 and they feel they have a good team. We have a good team, and have as good a chance as anybody."

Grossfeld picked Oklahoma as the favorite.

The Team

All-Around — "We did very well in most meets," said Grossfeld of his all-around athletes. Strongest for the Owls in this event is senior Don Dembrow, who finished 11th last year in the

NCAA meet. Dembrow won most of the dual meets SCSC participated in over the year. But according to Grossfeld, Dembrow had a bad day at the EIGL championship and was beaten by teammate Mario McCutcheon. McCutcheon scored 108.35 to win the event.

Floor Exercise — "We are fairly good," said Grossfeld. "We have a history of being very good in this event. This year was the first time in seven years we lost in the floor in a dual meet." Kormann and ex-Owl John Cosby were responsible for that record.

Pommel Horse — The Owls have a horse specialist in senior Tony Williams, who Grossfeld thinks has a good chance for an individual title.

"Williams is outstanding," said Grossfeld. "He has the skill and style to go all the way. He hasn't been up in the stats — they don't show the whole story — but he's got the capabilities."

Still Rings — "We have no

great standout," said Grossfeld of his still ring crew. Sophomore Glen Barletta has been the most consistent Owl in this even according to Grossfeld.

Vault — "We have no great standout," said Grossfeld, "but a solid team." He said his vaulters (Williams, Peter Mullen) have been getting mid-9s all year.

Parallel Bars — Grossfeld feels that he has another potential NCAA champ in this event in McCutcheon.

"He has won the last two EIGL championships and has excellent technique and style. He is outstanding in this event."

McCutcheon won the event with a score of 18.65 and Miller finished second with 18.15.

High Bar — "We've got good back-up," said Grossfeld. "This is one of the stronger events. McCutcheon is outstanding."

McCutcheon finished second in the EIGL championship in this event and Miller third with scores of 18.6 and 17.875 respectively.

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