Wrestling takes to mats

By Robert E. Malchman

Coming off a strong 14-5 year, the varsity wrestling team opens its season tomorrow against Plymouth State.

Despite retaining four of 24 wrestlers, third-year coach Tim Walsh is not more than cautiously optimistic about the team's future.

"We've had a couple of off-season injuries," he said. "Our 138-pounder has asthma. He's been too sick to practice. Our 158-pounder injured his leg playing IM football and won't be back until January. Our 177-pounder also injured himself playing IM football, separating his shoulder."

Adding to the team's woes, the Engineers' last graduation, Tom Fawcett '82, who placed fourth in the New England NCAA Division III championships last year, and their best man, 186-pound transfer from Japanese university three weeks into the season.

The outlook is not wholly bleak, however. Among the returning veteran is co-captain and New England Division II 142-pound champion Ken Schull. '84. Schull has not lost a dual meet in his two years at the Institute.

Walsh also looks to strong performances from returnees Tim Sheldon '85 at 172 pounds, "a good, proven wrestler," according to the coach. Steve Ikeda '85 at 150 pounds, who is "coming off a really good season of 16-5." Frank Montenegro '85 at 158 pounds, who finished third in the New England last year, and co-captain Steve Leibiger '85 at 177 pounds, who placed sixth in that tournament.

"We're hoping some of our new people are good, too," Walsh said. The freshmen to watch are Steve Fernandez at 189 pounds, Jim Manucci at 150, Jim Rolle at 190, and big Dave Rico, the team's lone heavyweight. Upperclassmen coming out for the first time are 158-pounder Tom Titto '83 and 167-pounder Brian Mannion '84.

Walsh looks ahead to the New England championship in January, saying the team's goal this year is to finish higher than last season's seventh place. "That's the most important part of the season," he said. "All of the dual meets and tournaments prior to that are just build-ups to the New England." Tomorrow's opener against Plymouth State gives the team the chance to start the season by breaking two-year dual meet jinx against the south-state rivals. "We haven't beaten them in a dual meet while I've been here," said Walsh. "Although we did beat them at their own Northern New England Tournament last year."

The season begins at noon today, and MIT wrestles at home for the first time a week later.

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