WRESTLING

# Mouzon seeks to repeat All-American performance

Each time before his wrestles, Winston-Salem State's Willie Mouzon goes through his personalized ritual.

Roughly 15 minutes before match time, he goes into his own version of solitude where he can totally focus on what he wants to accomplish before he meets his opponent. He gets set in his wrestling stance. Then he'll go through a variety of mat moves, attacking an imaginary opponent. After five to 10 minutes of this, he breaks out in a sweat -- ready for battle. And then he prays.

Mouzon's pre-competition routine has been a successful one as the Rams premier matsman. As a freshman last year, he finished eighth in the nationals to become a Division II All-American in the 158-pounds weight division. In addition, he is the defending CIAA champion in that weight class.

The Rams' lead guy has set some lofty goals which he feels are within his ability to achieve:

- Finish among the top three in the '89 nationals;
- Win the nationals before his college career ends;
- Become a four-time All-American;
- Earn a berth on the 1992 U.S. Olympic wrestling team.

With a week remaining in the regular season, the sophomore from Fayetteville, NC, was 25-4.

That record wasn't built on creme puff competition. Mouzon has defeated some of the best around in Division I and II -- which includes North Carolina, North Carolina State and Appalachian State. In early November, he finished third in the prestigious Eastern Nationals held at Norfolk, Va. That tournament is a major pre-season competition that features some of the top mat talent in the eastern U.S.

"Everybody says I'm on top because of what I did last year," Mouzon says. "But I know that I have to keep working harder than the next person. It's harder to stay on top once you get there. Now that people know about me and what I can do, everybody comes after me. They want to beat me so they can say they beat an All-American."

WSSU wrestling coach Mel Fair, a former collegiate standout at North Carolina A & T has witnessed first-hand, how much more attention Mouzon is getting from opponents this season.

"He's being heavily scouted," says Fair. "And it's been hard for him to do the things that he's been very successful at. Opponents are really zeroing in and blocking off his throws. Now he's in a lot of close matches where he may win or lose by one or two points. People aren't wrestling him in a very aggressive manner anymore. The thinking is that if they keep Willie from throwing them, they have a chance to win a close decision on points."

Photo by The Magnificent Eye

**After placing eighth in last year's nationals, Mouzon (left), feels it's a realistic goal for him to finish among the top three at the '89 nationals.**





There have been times this season when the close matches have taken their toll on Willie. In a couple of CIAA match-ups, Mouzon was pinned for the first time in his college career in a match-up vs. Virginia State. He also lost to Johnell Gainey of Norfolk State. Those weren't thrilling times for the WSSU star, but one has to feel that the manner in which he lost to those CIAA contenders will make him a better performer for the rest of this season.

Mouzon has been especially devastating on the opposition when he can execute his throws. He's the kind of wrestler that opponents can't afford to tie up. Once that happens, they're vulnerable to the take-down. Most will try to negate Mouzon's power with a lot of movement. But mobility doesn't necessarily guarantee victory against him.

Says Fair: "It takes a lot for someone to beat him and everything has to be clicking for you to have a good chance to win. But opponents can't afford to make mistakes. If he catches you, he's gonna throw you and then it's all over."

As a freshman, Mouzon caught more than a few people by surprise. Most freshmen, according to standard thinking, aren't ready to be competitive with wrestlers who already have collegiate experience.

Mouzon, however, wasn't your ordinary rookie.

The desire to excel was there. But he didn't foresee having the kind of year he did.

"My success just happened as the season progressed," he says. "From the start, all I wanted to do was be able to make the starting line-up. I kept working hard and things came together."

This season hasn't been much different for the 19-year old Mouzon. No longer unknown and untested, he faces the best available talent in his weight class every time he competes.

"I don't believe there's a lot of difference between what Willie has done this year compared to last year," Fair adds. "He had a really good year as freshman. And that's saying a lot because it's tough during the first year even when you have a lot of ability. You have to remember that he had to go through some juniors and seniors to do what he did last year.

"This season, opponents are treating him like a knockout puncher in boxing. People don't want to mix it up with him, so they decide to wrestle more defensively. That means that Willie has to make the adjustments to counter that."

Fair has ordered Mouzon to dispense with the throws during practice sessions. He's working on other moves such as cutting the ankles, changing his attack angles, and has added more defensive maneuvers which are designed to help him maximize his strength and quickness. "I know he can throw," Fair points out. "But by having him work on those other facets, I've forced him to do more wrestling and that will make him more complete. He should be able to deal with any style and win once he starts to master those other areas. And it's been tough for him, because he's been winning with the throws. But he's so good at it, that he can always revert back to it, if and when the opportunity presents itself."

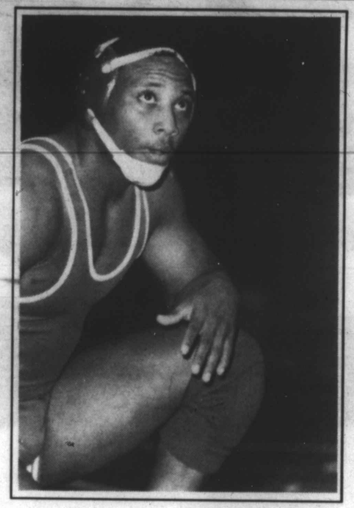

Photo by The Magnificent Eye

**Mouzon is a well-known commodity this year. Because of that, opponents are wrestling him more defensively, the strategy being to make the match go the distance and win the close decision. In order to stay on top, Mouzon has had to adjust his style to counter what he's been seeing in recent weeks.**

Mouzon is blessed with power and quickness on the mats. He has an explosiveness that opponents have problems dealing with. It is an asset that has served him well in his still budding college career.

As for what goes on in his mind before a match, Mouzon explains that his pre-meet routine puts him at a mental and physical peak to go out and produce at his highest level. "I'm thinking about all the different moves I can make in all the different positions -- standing, top position, and bottom position, and also how I can do some single leg takedowns.

"To do well in this sport, you have to have moves that you can use at anytime during a match. You have to know within yourself that you can do well, no matter who the opponent is."

Prayer has always been a help.

"No matter how good I may be, there will always be someone out there who is better. I know that regardless of whether I win or lose, it's God's decision and it's in my best interest," he says. "I know that I don't win without Him."

To stay on top, athletes have to stay at least one step ahead of the competition. The moves that won for you today, won't (and oftentimes don't) produce victories tomorrow. For Mouzon, this is especially true because he's heavily scouted.

"Wrestling is a lot more mental in college than in high school," the CIAA champ is quick to admit. "In high school, a lot of times, you can just use your strength to overpower people. But at this level, you have to have the mat skills to go along with that strength.

"And you have to constantly work on new things and doing things differently. You can't beat people with the same moves all the time. Coaches scout us and will advise their people of what their opponents like to do and they'll practice to not get beat by that certain move. So if you've developed other techniques, it makes you that much tougher to beat."

This season, Winston-Salem State has upgraded its schedule in a move that Fair hopes will eventually transform the Rams into one of the upper echelon Division II wrestling powers. Prior to the CIAA tournament, the team's overall record (4-9 at presstime) doesn't reflect the level of success that one might expect for an eventual national title contender. But at this point, the wins and defeats aren't what the move up to a higher level of competition is all about.

"A lot of people may look at that as a negative because we're not winning those competitions as a team," Mouzon says. "But it's really a positive for us. Even though we're losing, we're getting better and better because the competition we're going up against is better. If we were to keep on facing people that we know we can beat easily, it wouldn't do us any good."

Mouzon drew more than casual interest as a prep school performer at 71st High School. He was the '87 state champion in the 148-pounds weight class and an outside linebacker on the football team that won the state title in '86.

Playing college football was never part of Mouzon's plan, but wrestling was. Overtures came from Clemson, South Carolina, Appalachian State, and Pembroke State. But Winston won out, partly because of coach Fair and partly because of some home town connections.

"I already had some friends (James McLinnaham -- two-time CIAA champ, and Danny Bowden) from Fayetteville who were wrestling for Winston-Salem State," Mouzon says. "They always had good things to say about the program and they liked it. I just felt that I would feel more comfortable at WSSU.

"Plus coaches from the other schools always talked about what I could do for their school, how I could help their program. That's all that they emphasized. But coach Fair told me not to worry about wrestling and that if I did well, that would be fine. But he also told me that me getting a degree was the first priority."

**-Craig T. Greenlee**

# Kammy's got it all

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seemed to be a little tight for some reason."

Brown's floor presence gives every indication that she learned to play the game on the urban playgrounds by playing against boys as she grew up. It all started during her elementary school years and she's been a rising star ever since.

As a prepster, she played for the H.D. Woodson High School team that won three straight Metro D.C. titles. In high school, Brown averaged 18 points and six boards per contest.

Kammy learned her lessons so well as a youngster that she never found it difficult to make the change from high school to the college level of play.

"I didn't have to go through any adjustments from high school to college," Brown says flatly. "Every summer I played in women's recreational leagues and many of the players in that league played for college teams. So I picked up a lot of things about how the game is played on the college level and it gave me time to work on my passing and using my left hand."

Kammy is the first to confess that her home ties have benefitted her as a collegian. Forward Ruthie Miles and point guard Adrian Elliot were her high school teammates and all three start for the Trojanettes. "We all know how each other plays and that makes it a lot of fun."

Brown can be viewed as somewhat of a perfectionist. She has moments when she's satisfied with her level of play. But there are times when she gets down on herself for not playing up to her considerable potential.

"There are times when I'm down," she says. "But the good part about it is that I know my teammates will always be there for me. And that really helps me get my head back into the game."

The times are few and far between when Brown isn't into the game mentally. For the most part, opponents would like for her not to show up at all. But then again, that's not the style of Kammy Brown.

She comes to play and make her statement as a prime time player.

**-Craig T. Greenlee**