Pfeffer Plays Football, But...

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Sports Writer

No one may have noticed, but Bill Pfeffer does attend Virginia Tech on a football grant-in-aid. The 6-3, 260-pound freshman offensive lineman has not yet left any marks on the Hokies' grid history, but the Wilkes-Barre, Pa., native will go down as an all time great in another sport.

Recently several Virginia Tech gridders have helped some of the so-called minor sports achieve considerable success. Defensive back Henry Bradley set the Virginia State College high jump record last year, halfback Morris Blueford has been one of the thincldas' top printers and full back Paul Adams helped power the baseball team into the National Collegiate Athletic Association's South Atlantic Regional with a school record 10 home runs.

None, however, have quite matched the accomplishments of Pfeffer during his frosh year. Competing in the heavyweight division for the Virginia Tech wrestling team, he won the NCAA Eastern Regional at Slippery Rock, Pa. and advanced to the second round of the NCAA championships at Oklahoma University in Norman before losing to second seeded Harold Smith of Kentucky.

He was the first Hokie wrestler to qualify for the title round since Pat Rheim, now coaching at Radford, participated as an alternate in the 167-pound class in 1972, and the first since Brian Glover in the 130-pound division in 1963 to score a point in the finals.

Pfeffer might do even better in the future.

"If I can improve as much as I did this year in the next three I should be able to place pretty high and maybe win the championship," Pfeffer said.

Nevertheless the grappler's performance this season came as a surprise to him.

"It's pretty unusual for a freshman to go as far as I did. A lot of it was luck," he said.

His credentials indicate that, although luck may have played a role in determining his fortunes, the basic ingredients for stardom were present at the start.

At Coughlin High School he won the district championship three times, the regional twice, and was state runnerup his senior season.

Explaining Pfeffer's development, Virginia Tech Wrestling Coach Jerry Cheynet said, "Most heavyweights depend strictly on their size. Bill does more, though. He has a good background in the sport from Pennsylvania. In addition, he has good moves and quickness."

Pfeffer posted a 14-2 mark during the regular season and was 18-4 overall. His only losses before the tournament came against Lynn Morris of N.C. State and Ned Stepanshich of VMI. Both went to the NCAA's, losing in the first round.

As a team the Hokies finished 9-8 in dual meets.

Cheynet said that with a little experience Pfeffer would have done better against Smith in Norman.

"Bill was sort of taken up about facing the second seeded wrestler. As a result he didn't play his game and started standing around," Cheynet said. "One of his biggest assets is his ability to wear his opponents out. When he starts standing he gets beat.

"The tournament helped him, though. He found out that he can compete against the best. He has the ability to finish among the top six in the next few years," the mentor added.

After losing to Smith, Pfeffer was downed in the consolation round by Jeff Blatnick of Springfield, Mass.

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