Stocks



MIKE Gazette sports

columnist



Symbolic act, real hardship

ROVIDENCE, R.I. — The University of Iowa's damage control may inflict damage to the NCAA tournament hopes of the Hawkeyes men's basketball team.

The U of I, particularly its athletic department, has a public relations mess on its hands. Last week, former Iowa football players Ronnie Harmon and Devon Mitchell told the nation that they skated through school with weak grade-point averages despite taking plenty of lame courses.

The headlines were seen in all parts of the country. They linked academic mediocrity with Iowa athletics. Was this fair? It's very doubtful, since Harmon and Mitchell obviously thought so much of their futures in football that they hired agents well before their eligibility expired.

Most ballplayers who are sure they're going to make it in the pros are less inclined to run a down-and-out pattern to the dean's list.

But all people in Idaho and Massachusetts heard, thanks to what the attorney for agents Norby Walters and Lloyd Bloom said for the purpose of presenting universities as the opposite of victims, was that Iowa athletes don't take school seriously.

It was on CNN and ESPN, in the Chicago Tribune and Los Angeles Times. Without stretching one's imagination, one could conclude that Hawkeye ballplayers aren't much as students.

Never mind what the university always says about the graduation rate of Iowa athletes being higher than that of the total student body. That never produced sparks in a trial of national interest.

University President Hunter Rawlings III and others in Iowa City are well aware of the potential image problems the Harmon-Mitchell statements have caused and can continue to cause. Something, some show of integrity and teeth, had to be done to present Iowa as a school that asks plenty of its athletes as students.

But what? It had to be something to make the national sports news. Let's see. With the NCAA basketball tournament on hand, how about suspending a key player who could be considered in academic trouble? Yes, that would make a statement, wouldn't it?

So freshman starting forward Ray Thompson is off the team for the rest of the season despite being in good academic standing with the NCAA and the Big Ten.

Just how Thompson failed to meet Iowa's academic guidelines, and why this came to light only three days before the Hawkeyes' appearance here in the NCAAs, is

There isn't a team among the 63 others in the tournament that has given a player the boot for reasons involving the classroom. But none of the other 63 got kicked around in that Chicago courtroom last week.

If Tom Davis thinks his Iowa basketball team has been wronged by the decision to withhold Thompson from NCAA play, he hides it well. Typically, Davis offers no comment on the matter, except to state that he goes along with the brief press release the

university emitted Tuesday. It would be interesting to learn Davis' private thoughts on the issue. This is the NCAA tourney. This is what the whole season is about. Losing a starter under these circumstances, no matter what the long-term effect, hurts like crazy right now.

Is Thompson a victim? Probably not. He might have been designated as an example, but surely he put himself in the position to be one.

"What better way to make sure something like this doesn't happen again (than) to put your foot down right now," Iowa senior guard Roy Marble said Thursday.

"Unfortunately, it's not helping our basketball team any. But think they're doing what they feel is best. Whether you like it or not, you have to do what the school says."

Marble, by the way, said he will graduate this May. You will probably hear much of the academic achievements of Iowa athletes in the months to come.

NCAA TOURNAMENT

Rutgers coach milks the underdog image

Jepsen in, Thompson out as Hawks return to original starting lineup

> By Jim Ecker Gazette sportswriter

ROVIDENCE, R.I. — If size, a top-20 ranking and NCAA tournament experience count for anything, Iowa should rip Rutgers today in the opening round of the East Regional even without Ray Thompson.

But if overall quickness, momentum and fan support are determining factors, watch out for the Scarlet Knights, whose coach spent part of Thursday drumming up support for his overachieving underdogs.

"I hope all the people in Providence will cheer for us, because we're such an underdog," said Scarlet Knight first-year boss Bob Wenzel, unable to conceal a mischievous smile. "And I know the people in Providence like an underdog."

The first meeting ever between these Big Ten and Atlantic 10 conference schools is scheduled to begin at 1:37 p.m. (Iowa time) in the Civic Center in downtown Providence.

Iowa fans can watch on either KGAN-Channel 2 or ESPN, depending on their preference, although they'll find the same pictures and same announcers (Greg Gumbel and Quinn Buckner).

With Thompson, Iowa's freshman flash, back in Iowa City attending to his academic problems, Coach Tom Davis is giving 7-foot junior Les Jepsen another crack as a starter.

He's back in the lineup with 6-10 Matt Bullard, 6-8 Ed Horton, 6-6 Roy Marble and 6-2 B.J.

Armstrong, the same unit that began the season with seven straight wins before Bullard went down with a knee injury.

Thompson replaced Bullard in the starting five last December. Bullard just recently replaced Jepsen. And now Jepsen is replacing Thompson. Only problem is, there's no more Thompson,

who was banished for the season Tuesday, leaving just freshmen on the bench. The Hawkeyes don't like playing without

Thompson, who gave them a little bit of everything: scoring, rebounding, passing, pressure defense. 'I think it's had a great impact on the team,"

confessed Marble. "It's definitely going to hurt us. But it's not something we can't overcome." Wenzel, a bit of a humorist, hopes the Hawks

self-destruct without Thompson. "If it's a crippling blow to Iowa, that would

make me very happy," he said. Wenzel, the Atlantic 10 Coach of the Year for the miracle he performed in Piscataway this year,

is looking for any edge he can get. His tallest starter is 6-6, two of his regulars are

ailing, and nobody on his club has ever played in one of these NCAA pressure-cookers before. Heck, said Wenzel, "their second guard (Marble) is bigger than our center."

That's an exaggeration, but not by much. Wenzel hopes pressure defense will keep Iowa away from the bucket.

"If they get the ball inside and we get in foul trouble, that could be a major problem for us," he

Wenzel is hoping for sudden recoveries today from Emory Ward, a 6-6 forward who's had the flu, and Craig Carter, a 6-3 guard who's been dragging

Please turn to 2B: Hawks



Gazette photo by Todd McInturf

With a determined look, lowa's Les Jepsen eyes the basket in a pregame workout. Jepsen returns to the starting lineup today.

Who's that? Siena?

REENSBORO, N.C. (AP) — Who says Siena can't play in front of people?

The Saints, who have spent much of the last month playing before empty seats, scored one of the biggest upsets in recent NCAA tournament history Thursday as Marc Brown capped a 32-point performance by making two free throws with three seconds left.

That gave Siena, the 14th-seeded team in the East, an 80-78 upset victory over Stanford, 13th-ranked nationally, in the opening round of the NCAA East Regional.

The Saints blew a 16-point second-half lead before recovering on Brown's heroics.

It marked the third time since the tournament expanded to 64 teams in 1985 that a 14th seed in a regional had beaten a third seed. It also occurred in 1986, when Cleveland State beat Indiana and Arkansas-Little Rock beat Illinois.

"I was very concerned that we weren't going to play fast

• Please turn to 2B: Siena

Size is key for ISU; or is it?

It's Cyclones, UCLA in 1st-round NCAA matchup

> By Al Hall Gazette sportswriter

TLANTA — If Iowa State beats UCLA in tonight's first round of the NCAA Southeast Regional basketball tournament in The Omni, it could be because of its size.

But, if UCLA handles the Cyclones, size could still be the determining factor.

Confused? Don't be, because Iowa State Coach Johnny Orr says size probably won't make that much difference.

But big guys probably will help tip the scales in the 8:37 p.m. (Iowa time) game to be televised by KGAN-Channel 2.

The big guys on the two sides contribute in different ways. Iowa State has 6-foot-9, 265-pound Victor

Alexander, who came from nowhere to turn in a marvelous sophomore season. He does most of his damage on the inside and was named all-Big 8 after averaging 19.8 points and 8.6 rebounds.

UCLA, on the other hand, gets a lot of mileage out of tall forwards who shoot straight and often. Freshman Don MacLean stands 6-10 and averages 18.6 points and 7.5 rebounds and 6-8 junior Trevor Wilson averages 18.4 points and 8.6 rebounds. And center Kevin Walker has made 53 three-point shots this season.

It is a matchup of inside strength against perimiter strength.

"We have to contain Victor Alexander," UCLA Coach Jim Harrick said Thursday. "We have not been a team that's been consistent stopping a Please turn to 2B: Cyclones

Keota win gives Palmer a losing streak of 1

Eagles wear down Panthers to end 4th longest string at 103

> By Bob Denney Gazette sportswriter

DES MOINES — The Streak is history. Palmer High School's incredible boys' basketball run — the nation's fourth longest winning string of 103 games ended Thursday afternoon at Veterans Auditorium.

Keota forward Chad Reed banked home a five-foot go-ahead basket with 2:18 to dale, 64-57, in Thursday's other semifinal.

play, keying the sixth-ranked Eagles' 60-56

A matinee crowd of 11,200 witnessed the historic Class A semifinal contest in the

78th state meet. Top-rated Palmer (24-1), which last tasted defeat in the 1985 state consolation game against Hedrick, will awaken this morning to play another consolation contest. The Panthers face Rockwell-Swaledale

(23-2) at 10 a.m. Keota (24-1), denying Palmer a record fourth straight title, will try for its first crown tonight at 6:35 against No. 9 Colo-

NESCO (24-2). Colo-NESCO downed Rockwell-Swale-

It's nice to get the publicity about ending Palmer's streak, but we want to go out and win the state championship. That's what we came here for. ??

Keota coach Scott Brees

Reed, one of Keota's 6-foot-4 triple towers, led all scorers with 27 points on 10of-13 shooting. Teammates Eric Bombei and Chris Hobscheidt added 13 and 12 points, respectively.

Palmer's demise stemmed from one of its usually dependable weapons --- free throw accuracy. The Panthers finished 11-of-18 at the line, missing three critical bonus chances down the stretch. Keota, which misfired early from the

stripe, came back to nail 9 of 12 in the fourth quarter. "It was a great win, and the kids played

their hearts out," said Keota Coach Scott Brees, a Cedar Rapids native notching his 188th career victory. "It's a real privilege just to be out on the

floor with them. . . . I thought our kids were a little bit intimidated at first, but as the game wore on, I thought our kids got • Please turn to 3B: Keota

Race still muddled as Hawks send 5 to quarters

By J.R. Ogden Gazette assistant sports editor

OKLAHOMA CITY, Okla. -With each contender suffering a few lumps, the race for the NCAA Division I wrestling title wasn't any clearer Thursday night.

Pre-meet favorite Oklahoma State came through the opening (28-4-1) was knocked in to the day at the Myriad Convention Center in first place with 253/4 points. OSU has four wrestlers in today's quarterfinals and three others alive in consolation rounds.

Oklahoma was in second with 21½ points and five quarterfinalists, followed by Michigan (211/4), Arizona State (201/2), Iowa State (19½), Nebraska (19), Iowa (181/2) and Penn State (181/4).

Defending champ ASU has a meet-high six quarterfinalists. Iowa put five into the quarters, which begin at noon today. Semi-

finals are at 7 p.m. The Hawkeyes lost two from the championship bracket in the first round and one in the second. Iowa State pushed four through the first two rounds and Northern Iowa placed two in the quarters after advancing six to the second round.

Iowa, Iowa State and Northern Iowa all have two wrestlers alive in consolation action.

"The kids are wrestling tough," Iowa Coach Dan Gable said. "We've had to fight and scrap to win. We've won a lot of close ones and that's what we have to do. If we continue to win the close ones, we'll be in contention."

AFTER IOWA'S STEVE Martin consolation bracket by Arizona State's Zeke Jones at 118 pounds, the Hawkeyes bounced back with five straight wins, including Brooks Simpson's critical, 7-6, victory over Oklahoma State's Randy Couture at 190.

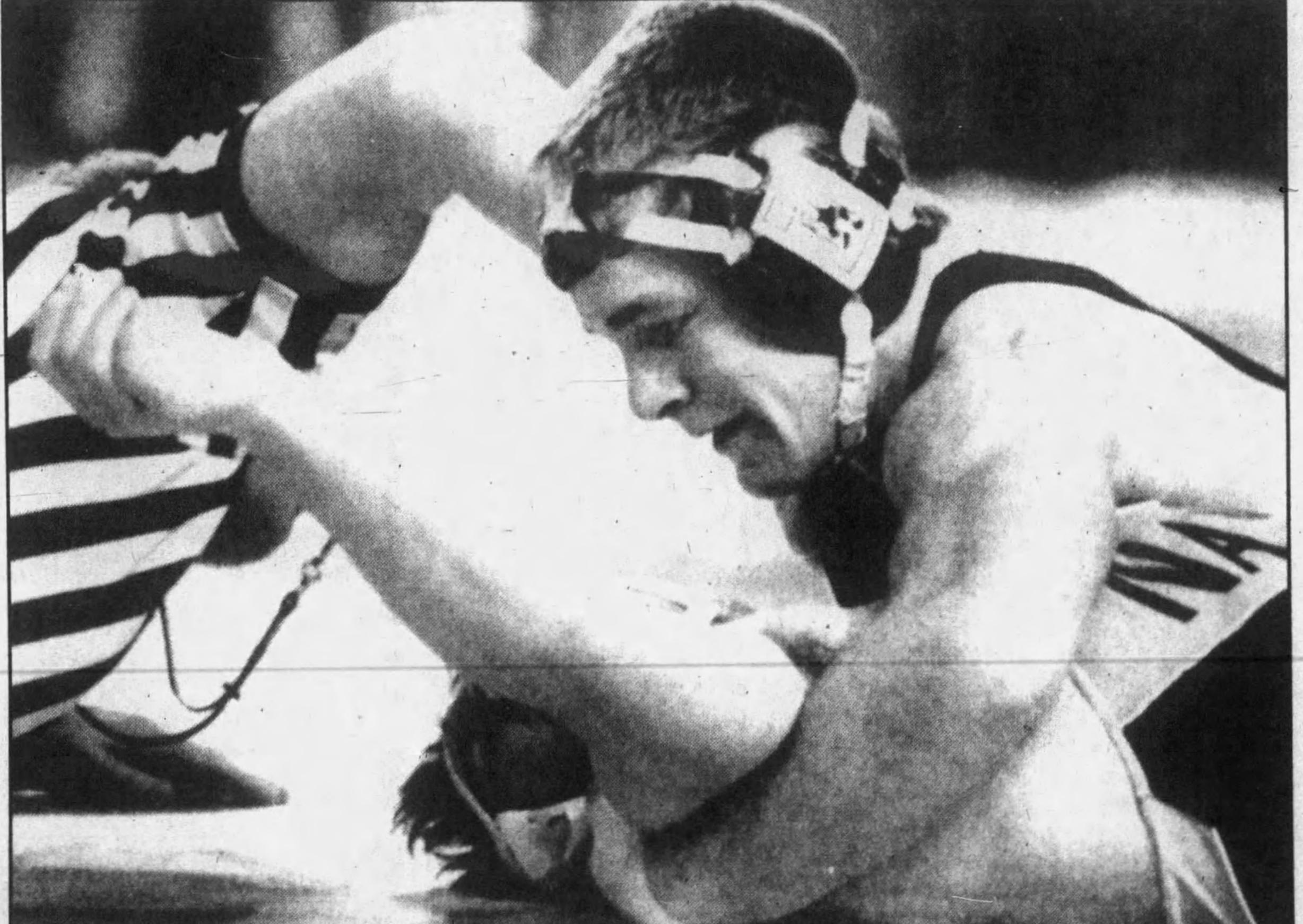
"I think we broke Courture in that one," Gable said. "Our conditioning paid off."

Freshman Tom Brands (30-2-2), the second seed at 126, got things rolling, topping Clemson's Kurt Howell, 11-5. Brands decked Navy's John Kainer in the first round in 5:35 after jumping out to a 14-4 lead.

Joe Melchiore (29-6), going for his fourth All-American finish, shook of slow starts to down Mike Donovan of Wyoming, 15-8, in the first round and Chuck Toler of George Mason, 10-6, in the second at 134.

"I felt real sick (in the morning)," said Melchiore. "I got some

• Please turn to 3B: Mat



AP photo

lowa's Tom Brands flattens Navy wrestler John Kainer during first-round action at the NCAA championships Thursday at Oklahoma City.