

SoCon Adds Associate Members for Wrestling

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The Southern Conference has added three universities as associate members in the sport of wrestling, it was announced Monday.

Campbell University, Gardner-Webb University and Southern Illinois University Edwardsville will join the league beginning with the 2011-12 season.

The addition of the three schools, in conjunction with UNCG's discontinuation of its program following the 2010-11 season, will bring the conference's wrestling membership to eight schools.

"The addition of these three programs should help solidify the sport of wrestling in the Southern Conference," said conference commissioner John Iamarino. "We are confident the new members will lead to a more exciting championship and greater opportunities to advance SoCon wrestlers to NCAA postseason competition."

Campbell, located in Buies Creek, N.C., and Gardner-Webb, situated in Boiling Springs, N.C., are familiar to SoCon teams, as four of six league teams competed against the Camels in dual meets last season while the Runnin' Bulldogs faced each conference team. Campbell and Gardner-Webb are full-time members of the Big South Conference.

Campbell, which has an enrollment of 3,000 students on its main campus, has fielded a wrestling program since 1968.

Gardner-Webb, boasting a student population of 4,300, is entering its 23rd season of wrestling in 2011-12.

SIUE, a school with 14,107 students located in suburban St. Louis, has a rich wrestling tradition, including three consecutive Division II national championships in 1984, '85 and '86. The Cougars are members of the Ohio Valley Conference for the majority of their sports.

The Cougars, which are in their final year of transition to full Division I membership status, will become eligible to compete for the Southern Conference championship starting in the 2012-13 season.

The three new institutions will join with Appalachian State University, The Citadel, Davidson College, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga and Virginia Military Institute as the eight schools in the Southern Conference for wrestling.

The Southern Conference, which first held a wrestling championship in 1930 and has done so in each season since 1947, will conduct its 75th wrestling championship in Chattanooga, Tenn. next March. The league itself, founded in 1921, is entering its 91st season in 2011-12.