

Not Short on Success

By RAY BUCK

Rich McPhee's red rubber jacket glistened like a squashed tomato as he tumbled and rolled around the black and white mats with Bill Schick in the tightly-sealed wrestling room in the basement at East Rochester. It was just another day in The Pit.

McPhee, ER's prize 177-pounder, was working out hard with Schick (167). They squeezed, twisted and turned each other inside-out. McPhee dropped seven pounds. And 2½ hours later when everybody left, the celery-green concrete walls were dripping like the inside of a sauna.

Something you've got to know about McPhee; he's an absolute glutton for hard, punishing work.

Fifteen feet away stood Coach Don Quinn, the man who 14 years ago came to East Rochester to begin a wrestling program and turned a basement storage area into a sweatbox from which sprang a mighty empire.

"McPhee is at a real disadvantage because he's short (5-8)," said Quinn. "Those short arms and legs are to his disadvantage especially when he's on top. Let me tell you, if Rich McPhee had the leverage other kids have NOBODY would touch him."

He recently won the Windsor Tournament (near Binghamton) and there was McPhee taking the top step of the traditional awards platform, while on the next step down stood the kid he had just beaten—who came to the top of Rich's head. The story of his life!

"But he makes up for it with his moves and by keeping himself in excellent condition," said Quinn. "He's best on his feet and is really shrewd with his takedown. He's tough, too, from the bottom position."

McPhee is a junior. He's 5-0 in dual meets and 12-0 overall. Twice he's wrestled heavy-

weight, once against McQuaid and another time against Mooney, and both times the meet was riding on the outcome.

There's no real advantage to being short, said Quinn quite frankly, unless perhaps it's the small target (legs) he gives to shoot at. That hardly offsets the lack of leverage, although this guy McPhee has managed to do quite well for himself.

His only defeat in high school came as a freshman wrestling 155 pounds for the JVs. He moved up to 167 for a match against Rush-Henrietta and got pinned. "I forgot the kid's name," he said, turning bright red from the embarrassment of it all.

As a sophomore last year, he was untouched. A tough number named Ron Whitcomb (now wrestling varsity at East Carolina State) was ahead of him at 177, so McPhee wrestled JVs—with the exception of six matches for which Quinn brought him up. He won all six and against some stiff competition like Canandaigua, Eastridge, Irondequoit and Churchville-Chili.

He participated in five summer tournaments, which is an absolute necessity, says Quinn, if anybody wants to be good in the mad, mad world of Rochester wrestling. He played football for Quinn and made All-Greater Rochester at defensive tackle.

"I can remember when I was in the eighth grade and messing around with guys older than me like Peter Durry," said McPhee. "And when I was a freshman, guys like Whitcomb and Dick O'Lena and Steve Rock, they'd throw you around like



ER's unbeaten Rich McPhee

toys. That's what makes you tough.

"A kid is only as tough as the kids he's gone around with," he continued, "so in my case, I'm only as tough as what Ron Whitcomb or anybody made me."

Whitcomb, O'Lena and Rock came down to The Pit during the holidays and went after some of the big boys like McPhee and Schick. Rock is wrestling varsity at Springfield College; O'Lena works here in the city.

Rich McPhee plays down his accomplishments. He doesn't fill the air with a lot of promises, either. That's not his style.

"Nobody is that great in high school," he said. "Not that many kids can't be beaten. A lot of it is just a person's name. They're getting to know my name from football and wrestling . . . but everybody is going to get beat, I don't care who he is."

McPhee quickly named off three awfully good 177-pounders in Bob Menz of Webster, Dan Hopper of Greece Olympia and Mike Macaluso of Gates-Chili.

Does he think he'll get knocked off somewhere along the way, sometime?

"Yes," he said without hesitating. "Heck, even Dan Gable got beat, didn't he?"