

## MULES SEND SIX WRESTLERS TO NCAA CHAMPIONSHIPS

**WARRENSBURG, MO (March 5, 2002)** -- Central Missouri State will send six wrestlers to the NCAA Division II Championships this weekend (Mar. 8-9) at Kenosha, Wis. Included in the Mules' qualifiers are four former all-Americans - senior **Luke Shaw (Columbia/Hickman HS)** at 133, senior **John Rolling (Carmel, Ind./Carmel HS)** at 184, sophomore **Drew Passley (Webb City/Webb City HS)** at 141, and junior **Willie McCowan (Falcon/Lebanon HS)** at heavyweight. Rolling was fourth and McCowan was fifth at last year's Division II Championships, while Passley was sixth in 2000 and Shaw was fourth in 2000.

Also representing the Mules will be sophomore **Jared Lien (Wichita, Kan./Goddard HS)** at 157 and junior **Eric Pizzi (Washington, Pa./St. Louis CC-Meramec)** at 149.

All six qualified by finishing in the top four Feb. 24 at the Midwest Regional at Aberdeen, S.D., where the Mules were runner-up to Central Oklahoma.

Freshman Erkin Tadzhimetov (Tashkent, Uzbekistan), who won the 125-pound title at the Midwest Regional and who is ranked #1 in Division II at 125, has been declared ineligible for the Division II Championships. A protest was lodged against Tadzhimetov at the Midwest Regional concerning weigh-in procedures. The regional committee ruled he was eligible to compete. However, that ruling was appealed to the NCAA national wrestling committee, which has declared him ineligible for the championships.

**Shaw (25-14)** is making his fourth straight trip to the national tournament. He placed third at the Midwest Regional and has a career record of 114-47, the third best win total in Mules' history. **Rolling (14-11)**, who has come back from an early-season knee injury, is making his fourth trip to the national tournament after a fourth straight runner-up finish at the Midwest Regional. With a career record of 99-57, he needs one more win to reach the 100-victory plateau in his career. **McCowan (33-9)**, who has the best record among the Mules' qualifiers, is making his third trip to the national tournament after placing first at the Midwest Regional. He has recorded a team-leading 21 pins. **Passley (29-22)**, who sat out last season after placing sixth as a freshman two years ago, placed fourth at the Midwest Regional. **Lien (25-19)** and **Pizzi (17-13)**, both second-place finishers at the Midwest Regional, are making their first trip to the Division II Championships.

In the final individual NCAA Division II rankings, Rolling and McCowan were ranked seventh in their respective weight classes

In their seventh season under coach Robin Ersland, the Mules were ranked eighth in the final Division II coaches' poll. They were 12-8 in dual matches this season. The Mules scored 45 points and finished 11<sup>th</sup> at last year's Division II Championships, their best-ever team finish.

Host school Wisconsin-Parkside will have results from the Division II Championships available at the following Web site: [www.uwp.edu/athletics/wrestling/](http://www.uwp.edu/athletics/wrestling/)

Pronunciation: Erkin (air-KEEN) Tadzhimetov (Tad-zhuh-MET-ahv)