

Duck wrestlers looking stronger than ever

By GREG STILES
Of the Emerald

*Although practice is just beginning,
good recruiting has swelled the ranks*

There are a lot of new faces on Oregon's wrestling team this season. The old ones, however, will be the key in the Duck's bid to win their second Pacific-8 championship in three years.

A rash of injuries hindered Oregon in having an outstanding dual meet record last year. Compounding the problem was Oregon's lack of bodies even from the beginning. Consequently, in several meets the Ducks were forced to forfeit one or more weights.

Oregon head coach, Ron Finley, went recruiting with just that in mind. It was no accident that he went out and signed-up 20 new wrestlers last spring.

"We missed a couple of blue chippers," said Finley, "but we made up for it in quantity. Instead of having 17 wrestlers back, we'll have about 35."

The Ducks lost three front-liners to graduation. Shuichi Shoji, Joe Sade and Greg Gibson are gone. Two of the three have sound replacements, however. Gibson's heavyweight spot is another thing.

"Heavyweight is the only place where we didn't get an adequate replacement," said Finley. "It's hard to replace someone who's been second place in the nation two years in a row."

If the Ducks had a heavyweight the caliber of Gibson, they'd be awfully tough to beat in dual meet competition. Most likely they will anyway.

The reason lies in Duck strength in nearly every other weight. The strong suit for Oregon will be between the 158 and 190-pound performers. Look for the Ducks to lose very few matches in that range throughout the season.

Kevin Kramer, a senior, was second in the Pac-8 at 158 last year. Two years ago he won the title and Tom Brown of Washington, who defeated Kramer for the championship dropped out of school this fall.

Tim Strobel, who did a bang-up job filling in for Buck Davis when he was injured for most of the season, didn't get to show his stuff in the Pac-8 meet. Davis was able to compete the final week before the conference meet, and beat Strobel in a series of challenges to earn the berth.

Strobel may not make it to the Pac-8 meet this year either. Randy Besaw was third at 167 in the meet last year, and both juniors would like to gain the number one berth.

Strobel has the advantage now though, because Besaw is 15-20 pounds over his wrestling weight.

Davis' cinderella comeback of last year can only be topped by his gaining a place at nationals this year. He won the conference title last year at 177 after finishing second in 1975.

Bob Bragg, another senior, won the Pac-8 championship at 190 in his first season with the Ducks last year. He was seeded fourth at the NCAA meet, but withdrew because of illness.

At 118, Steve Hart, a three-year senior letterman, will seek to regain his top spot in the Duck line-up. He was hurt prior to the conference meet, and Norm Night (sophomore) came on to finish third. Night nearly made it to the Montreal Olympics by finishing second in the qualifying for the U.S. Greco-Roman team.

Susumu Hagahira returns to Oregon after spending his sophomore year at Northern Idaho Junior College, where he posted an 18-2 record. He was slated to wrestle in the Pac-8 meet two years ago, but couldn't lose weight for the 118-lb competition. He is ticketed to replace Sade at 126.

Senior Randy Robinson will be forced to battle off a pair of newcomers for the number one spot at 134. Steve Starzenski, a sophomore transfer from the University of Tampa's defunct wrestling program, and Reynold Capps, from Sierra Junior College in Rockland, Calif., will put the pressure on Robinson.

Scott Bliss, one of Oregon's best recruits ever according to Finley, will finally get to make an appearance this winter. He'll fill

the 142 slot manned by Shoji last year. Bliss missed his entire freshman season due to a badly injured left knee.

Apparently Bliss is ready for this season, though. Finley said he defeated last year's fourth place finisher at 142 in the NCAA's during the summer.

Dan Hollembaek will return for his sophomore year at the 150-pound slot after finishing third in the conference last season.

The heavyweight spot is up for grabs. Veterans Terry Shanley and Bryan Dunagan are up from the 190 class. Mark Cramer, a linebacker on the football team, and Mel Pedersen, a freshman from Jefferson, Ore., all will be vying for action.

"Injuries hurt us pretty good last year," said Finley. "This year, we can hold some guys out when they have minor injuries."

"We had the same amount of scholarships as we had last year," continued the coach, "but we had a little more money to recruit with and had good success recruiting guys without (financial) aid."

Wrestling coaches always like to talk about potential, and Finley thinks this group has as much as any he's had.

"Potentially, we have several guys who could place at nationals," said Finley. "Kramer, Bragg, Davis and possibly Strobel, plus Besaw, Bliss or Hart and possibly Susumu."

If potential turns into potency, Oregon may break into one of the top powers in collegiate wrestling.

Sportfolio

Lee nabs basketball honor

Former Oregon basketball player Ron Lee has been named to the Citizens Savings College Basketball Hall of Fame, along with Jim McMillian, formerly of Columbia University, and James Walker, who played at Providence last season.

All three were chosen in the 1976 election.

Equestrian team to meet

The University Equestrian team will meet at 7 p.m. tonight in the EMU, room to be posted.

V-ballers to host Beavers

Oregon's volleyball team will host Oregon State at 6 p.m. tonight in a game in B-54 Gerlinger Annex.

The Ducks finished second in their pool competition in the PSU-sponsored "North-South Tournament" held last weekend in Portland.

emerald sports

Soccer action

CORVALLIS — Oregon's NCSC soccer team played OSU to a 2-2 tie in a game on the OSU campus Saturday.

In soccer action this week:

TONIGHT — Oregon OISA vs. OCE, Autzen Stadium, 7 p.m.
THURSDAY — Oregon women's varsity vs. Lewis and Clark, Autzen, 6 p.m.
SUNDAY — Women's varsity vs. OSU, 12 noon, followed by Oregon NCSC vs. OSU men, at Autzen


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