

Hungry Ducks

Ballester's crew wants a title

While most attention on campus is currently centered on the men's basketball team, gymnastics coach Bill Ballester is quietly preparing his squad for its annual assault on the Pacific-8 title.

The Flying Ducks, however, are mere challengers to the throne. California-Berkeley, with Olympian Tom Beach and seniors Iverson Eicken and Mike Dubos, has won the conference title the last nine years in a row, including last year when the Pac-8 finals were held in McArthur Court.

1976 wasn't a pleasant memory for Oregon. Although the Ducks finished better in optional competition, Cal leapt out far ahead in first-day compulsories, scoring a two-day total of 430.35 points to the Ducks' second-place 424.70.

To make matters worse, the meet this year (March 10-12) will be hosted by the Bears, in the friendly confines of Harmon Gymnasium.

Ballester is taking the role of underdog this season, but he bristles at the thought that Oregon is destined for a second-place finish.

"California has to be favored again," said the coach. "With the team that finished third, first and third in nationals the last three years, they've got some good kids."

"But we're not interested in a second-place finish. We'd like to see Berkeley finish second so we'd have two Pac-8 teams at nationals."

There's a good reason for Ballester's gruffness. The NCAA takes just the Pac-8 champion as a team, and the second-place finisher gets a chance to advance only if another conference champ in the nation doesn't win with a total of 417.

The Ducks waited with their score of 424, but the at-large berth didn't come. Instead, Oregon ended up sending seven individuals.

Ballester's crew completed its dual meet season with a perfect 11-0 mark over the weekend, dumping Portland State 213.75 to 198.00. In that meet, Curt Rodgers hit a mark of 9.75 on the pommel horse for the best score in the nation this year, and Scott McDowd just missed tying his school record of 9.65 with a 9.6 on the rings.

It has taken the Ducks a couple of years to build the program to the present level, and with performances like this, Ballester thinks it's just a matter of time before Oregon surpasses the Golden Bears.

"Six of the eleven teams we beat this year were ranked in the top ten," he remarked. "Yet, everyone talks this year like, 'Are you going to lose again?' It's like I have to apologize for our finish last year. Heck, Cal has never been out of the top five teams in the nation the last 10 years."

The Bears have a returning champion in Beach, who took both the parallel bars (9.25) and the horizontal bar (9.6) last year. All-American Rodgers, however, stands a good chance of taking the pommel horse, since NCAA champion Ted Marcy of Stanford won't be back to defend his conference title.

And Ballester gives Duck freshman Miki Moyal a chance to take the all-around competition over Beach.

"Moyal has scored 107-plus the last two times out, and he will probably will push Beach for the title," said Ballester. "Breck Grigas, another freshman, could also be right up there."

Only time will tell if this is the year for the champs to fall. If Oregon wins, it will be because of an outstanding team effort. They won't have it any other way. Says Ballester:

"Our major concern now is getting to the NCAA's as a team. Anything else would be a disappointment."

With a 131.20

Gymnasts set new record

Wendy Halberg became the first Oregon woman to score more than 9.0 in an individual event and Oregon's Flying Ducks chalked up a school record of 131.20 in team competition Saturday and Sunday in California.

Halberg scored 9.20 in the uneven bars to win that event in the Western Hemisphere Games at Cal-State Hayward Saturday. Thirty all-around competitors from 16 West Coast schools competed in the meet. Each school was allowed a maximum of two competitors, and all gymnasts competed in the all-around competition. Halberg's 33.35 was good for 11th place while her 8.5 in the vault gave her sixth in that event. Karolyn Wold of Oregon placed sixth on the uneven bars with 8.55 and 27th in all-around with 31.25.

Wold came back the next day to score a lifetime best of 33.25 in a triangular meet with Long Beach State and Chico State in Chico. The Ducks lost to Long Beach State, 131.25-131.20. Wold won the balance beam competition with a lifetime best of 8.70, was third in the floor exercise with 8.40 and third in all-around. Halberg's 33.15 and Jan Model's 33.00 gave Oregon its best team performance of the year. Model, recovering from a foot injury, won the uneven bars with 8.55 with teammate Elaine Fisher second with 8.30.

The California trip bolstered Oregon's hopes of scoring 134.00 in the NCWSA regional championship March 11-12 in Missoula,

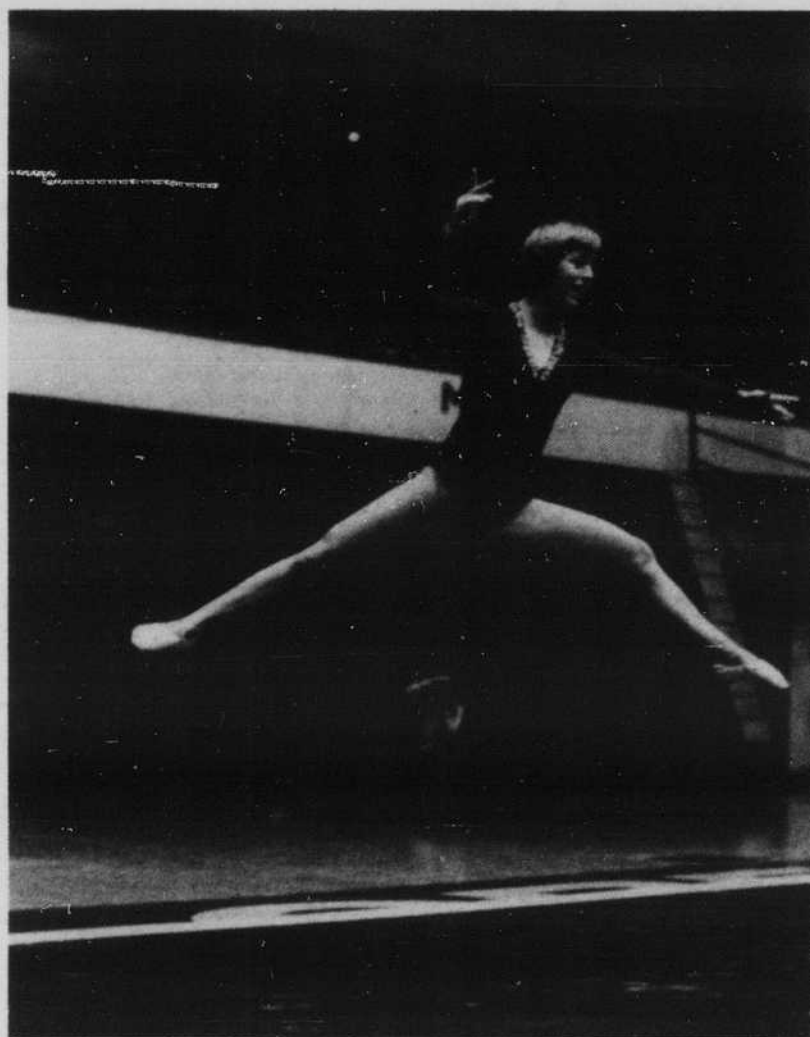


Photo courtesy WIA

Wendy Halberg became the first Oregon gymnast to score over 9.0 with a 9.2 on the uneven bars.

Mont. in order to meet the team qualifying standard for the AIAW national meet. Individuals must

score 9.0 in a single event or 34.00 in all-around to qualify for nationals.

Women spikers shine in meets

Five members of the Oregon women's track team won events in two separate invitational track meets over the weekend.

Freshman Ellen Schmidt, just recovering from an achilles injury, won the 800 at the Oregon State All-Corners Meet in Corvallis Friday. Schmidt won in 2:17.4, and Mary Officer won the long jump with a leap of 18-3.

Other top marks in Corvallis were Oregon graduate Lynne Windbigler's winning discus toss of 170-7 3/4 which was a new field record. Rose Ann Klingerman

improved her lifetime best by 1.5 seconds in the 200 by placing second with 26.3.

At the University of Washington Indoor Sunday, Dawna Rose and Georgene Rose won their heats in the 300-yard dash with times of 37.4 and 38.4, respectively. Debbie Roth also won the mile in 5:08.8.

In other events, Officer was second in the 60-yard hurdles with 8.4, and Robin Baker placed second in the open mile with 5:11.0.

Oregon's track season officially opens on April 2 in the Pacific-8's

first coed dual meet ever when Washington comes to Hayward Field.

Whitman drops f-ball

WALLA WALLA, Wash. (AP) — Football will be discontinued as an intercollegiate sport at Whitman College, President Robert Skotheim said today.

Skotheim said money spent on the sport, played at Whitman since 1892, will be retained in the budget and spent for other activities, such as intercollegiate soccer and rugby, a club sport.

Sportfolio

IM slates x-country run

An intramural cross country run will be held at 4 p.m. Friday on the intramural track. Team rosters are due by noon, Friday.

Basketball championships set

The intramural basketball championships begin at 6:45 p.m. Thursday in the west and center gyms of Esslinger Hall.

Sailors win NIYRA race

The Oregon sailing team won the overall title at the Northwest Intercollegiate Yacht Racing Assn. race Saturday and Sunday.

Led by Peter Powell and Ted Kraus, Oregon topped the seven-team field with British Columbia and Washington getting second and third.

Table tennis squad now No. 1

The Oregon table tennis team became the number one team in the Northwest when it defeated Portland State 10-5, Portland Community College 10-5 and Oregon State 8-7 in Portland over the weekend.

Oregon was led by John Kretchmer, who won all nine of his matches and lost just one game. Keying the win over OSU was Chris Depee. Depee upset Vu Van Dien 19-21, 22-20 and 26-24 after Dien upset Oregon player-coach Bruce Douglass.

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