

gymnastics

Oregon's Bush and Weidemann find being number two rewarding

By BARRY BREEDE
Of the Emerald

Being number two makes for a lot of hard work.

If you're in the car rental business you must endlessly compete with O.J. Simpson racing through airport lobbies. If you're Oregon gymnast Mike Weidemann or Jerry Bush, you must constantly battle the nation's best side horse and ring men respectively in every meet. For that matter in every practice.

Both Weidemann and Bush have had to take the underdog role to side horse man Tom Truedson and ring man Scott McEldowney, who besides being the best in the nation are teammates of Bush and Weidemann.

However, the thought of living a life of obscurity behind the popular Truedson and McEldowney does not deter the efforts of Weidemann or Bush, and in fact has come as a blessing of sorts.

"Being on the same squad with the best is an inspiration," says Weidemann, a junior. "Every time Tom goes out to compete it's like watching a movie or going to a clinic. I can learn so much just from watching him that it makes it easier for me to overcome my mistakes."

For the senior Bush, going against the number one ring man provides a challenge that he feels he can't find anywhere else.

"When I first came to Oregon there was no way I could beat Scott," says Bush. "But over the years I've been able to work with him, and now there's that chance that I could get him sometime. If he's not right on line with his routine and I'm at my best then I have a good shot at beating him. Because of that, it really forces me to try and be perfect every time out."

A native of Long Beach, Calif., Weidemann has had to play a supporting role for quite a few years, but every time, the final dividends have made the waiting pay off.

"I was behind the number one

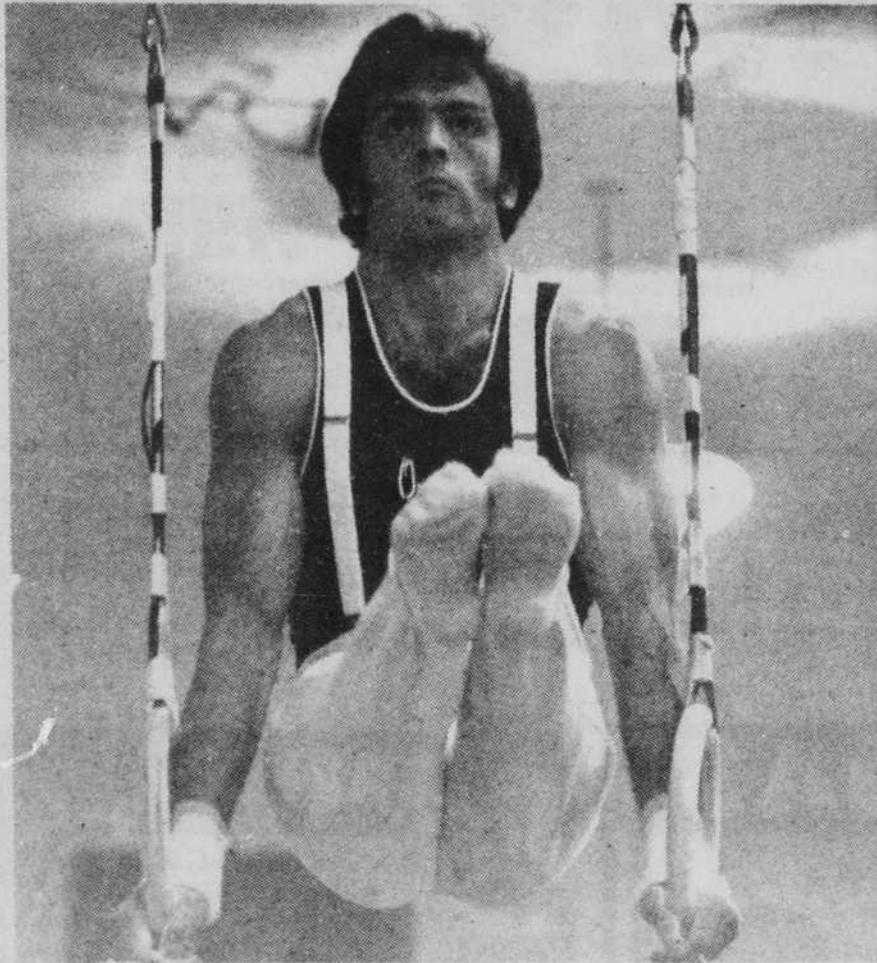


Photo by Steve Schneider

Jerry Bush (above) and Mike Weidemann see a lot of benefits from being number two on their team, such as learning from their teammates Tom Truedson and Scott McEldowney.

side horse man in high school and at Long Beach City College," says Weidemann, "but everytime I was able to train hard and when the number one guy graduated I was able to move into the top slot." With Truedson in his final year, Weidemann is hoping that history will repeat itself and he will be able to nail down the number one spot next year for the Ducks.

"I came here because I knew the competition was the best in the nation, and that's what I wanted," says Weidemann. "I could have gone to schools like Brigham Young where I was offered a scholarship, but I wanted a challenge from people like Tom. Besides," says Weidemann, "it wouldn't be realistic for me to go to another school, be the number one man, and feel I was the best in the na-

tion when guys like Tom are here at Oregon."

For Bush, coming from nearby Cottage Grove to take on the best has "been good in a lot of ways. I have one big advantage over other gymnasts in the nation because I am always watching the best there is and I can make it pay off for me when I perform."

Like Weidemann and Truedson, both Bush and McEldowney work together closely and help each other out in creating and performing their routines. For Bush, much of the help from McEldowney has been in helping him develop his "swing" movements on the rings, considered to be one of the toughest aspects of ring competition.

"Scott has a natural technique for the swing which he brought with him from high school," says Bush. "When I came here I had no idea how to swing, but with help from coach Ballester and Scott, I've been able to pick up quite a bit."

Graduation from high school left no doubts in Bush's mind where he wanted to spend his college career, despite the fact he would be playing second fiddle to McEldowney by coming to Oregon.

"I never wanted to go to another school besides Oregon," says Bush. "The program here is designed around hard work, and that's what I wanted. I didn't have a heck of a lot of natural skills when I graduated from high school, but through lots of work here I've been able to develop quite a bit."

Both Weidemann and Bush agree being number two takes work in trying to overtake the top man in their events. But according to Weidemann, all it means is "you have to take it seriously every time you go out. If you screw around you might as well not even go out."

Like the car rental agency, "We try harder" sums up the attitudes these gymnasts have taken.



Photo by Mike Marino

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