

wrestling

Oregon wrestlers near career finish

By NICK DAWSON
Of the Emerald

Really good wrestlers, like good football, basketball, baseball, et. al. players, are not always easy to come by.

Oregon wrestling coach Ron Finley will be losing two this year to graduation. Randy Besaw, 177 pounds, and 158-pounder Dan Hollembaek might be seeing their last collegiate action this weekend in Corvallis, where the Pac-8 championships will be contested.

But if things go right, both wrestlers might be wrestling competitively just a little bit longer.

If Besaw and Hollembaek finish in the top two in their weight classes—which looks like a good possibility—or are picked as one of six wild card third place finishers, they both will see action in the NCAA national wrestling championships to be held March 16-18 at the University of Maryland.

Finley knows his wrestlers have a very good shot at just that.

"Dan should be seeded number one," said Finley. "He's beaten (Ron) Ziebart twice."

Ziebart is Oregon State's 158-pounder. He has been one of the best wrestlers in the conference for a couple years. Hollembaek has beaten him easily in those two matches.

Hollembaek figures he will be seeded number one going into the championship meet.

For Besaw, the situation is only slightly different. The number one seed will likely be Marty Ryan of OSU. Besaw has lost to Ryan four times this year, one coming in overtime. He has also tied Ryan once. Finley believes Besaw can

take Ryan this weekend, though a second place finish seems more likely.

"If he (Besaw) really wrestles well I think he can win it," said Finley. "Every time he's wrestled Ryan he's come closer (than the time before)."

A high Pac-8 finish is what both of these wrestlers are looking for.

"Four years rides on what happens up at Oregon State," said Hollembaek. "I don't think there's any way I won't qualify for nationals. I don't think there is anyone that can beat me," he added.

"In fact, I wrestle better in Corvallis than anywhere else," Hollembaek said. "I've only lost two matches up there." And Hollembaek has seen plenty of action on the Gill Coliseum mats, starting with his first place high school finish in the state meet in Corvallis four years ago, all the way through his four collegiate wrestling years.

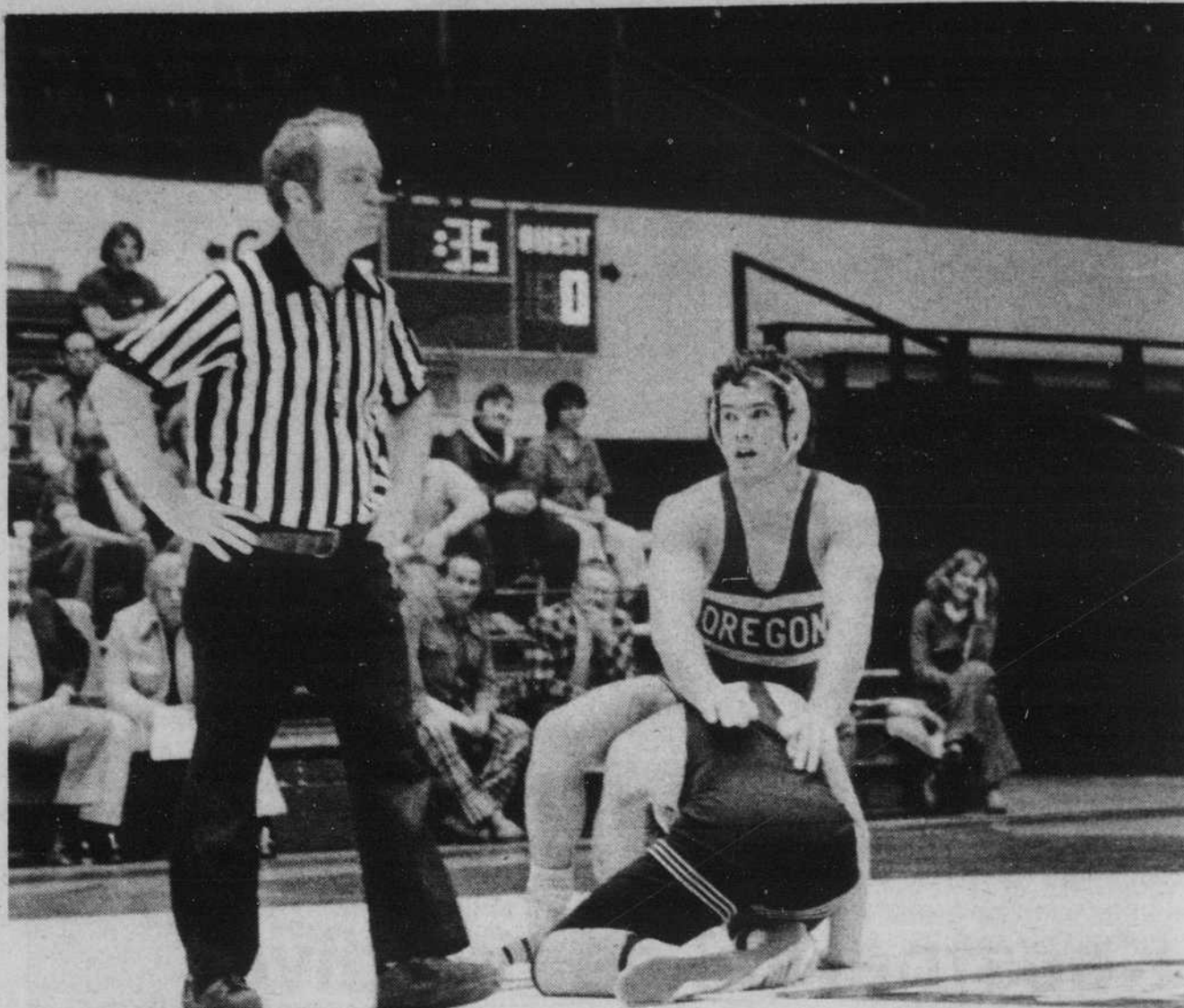
For Besaw it's much the same way.

"To me it's really important. My first two years I didn't go to the Pac-8s," he said. "I've never been to the nationals, so that's another thing to shoot for."

Besaw is also hoping to make up for a disappointing showing he had his junior year. The Eugene native was seeded second in the 167-pound weight class, but lost in the first round. He still came back to finish third, but was not chosen to go to the nationals.

Both Hollembaek and Besaw have had a long climb up their respective ladders of success.

For Hollembaek, it started when he won the state high school 148-pound title while at Thurston High. Finley said Hollembaek wasn't the best high school champion ever.



Photos by Nick Dawson

Randy Besaw (below) and Dan Hollembaek are two seniors that want to go out the right way — by winning individual titles in the Pac-8 championship meet. Oregon State wrestlers should provide the Oregon's veterans with the most competition in their quest for national tourney berths.

"In all reality, Danny was not a great high school champion," Finley said. "He won the state title because he was a competitive and gutsy person."

Hollembaek agreed with Finley's assessment. "I kinda won state on conditioning," he said. Hollembaek's high school coach really emphasized that, he added, and that helped Hollembaek do as well as he did.

Hollembaek had an undistin-

guished freshman year at Oregon, going 0-1 on the year. In his sophomore season, Hollembaek was 3-13, but still had a strong third place showing in the Pac-8 meet. Last year, he was 17-14-2, but didn't compete in the championships because of an injured knee. Going into the Pac-8s, Hollembaek is 25-13-1 overall. "He's improved a great deal as the season's gone along," said Finley. Hollembaek explained why. "This year my technique is so much better than any other year," he said. "Most of my losses have been on my own mistakes. Since Christmas time, my mistakes have dwindled down to a bare minimum."

For Besaw, it may have been a more difficult road to trudge. He graduated from Sheldon High in Eugene as the state greco-roman champion and was part of a U.S. team that went to Bulgaria in 1975.

He came to Oregon as a 167-pounder, and had a 1-2 record in his first year. He followed that with a 1-0 record in his sophomore year, as he wrestled behind All-American Duane Stutzman.

It was in his junior year that Besaw had perhaps his best season, finishing 20-12-1. That was also the year he had the disappointing third place finish in the Pac-8 meet.

Last year, Besaw redshirted, suffering from shoulder and back problems. It was during last year that Besaw found out a few things about himself.

Because of his back problems, Besaw was placed in traction. During the month he spent in bed, Besaw ballooned to 240 pounds. Teammates, friends and even Finley questioned Besaw's ability to come back.

Besaw made up his mind that he would come back.

"One of the main incentives I had was to come back and show them that they were wrong," he said. It took Besaw awhile, but he did drop his weight back down. "Now that I've got my weight down, I never worry about my weight," he said. He added, "It's real hard to come back when you sit out a year." Only recently has Besaw reached the point he wants to be. He has a 19-14-5 record on the season.

I'm in good shape right now. I'm doing everything I can," said Besaw. "The rest is up to the Lord, as far as I can see."

Even if the two end their wrestling careers on the mats at Oregon State, their contribution to the team will not be forgotten.

"The guys (other team members) have been looking up to those two for leadership," said Finley. "Dan and Randy have done a real good job of being team leaders. I think they pretty well lead by example."

Besaw and Hollembaek have both enjoyed their leadership roles, and hope that the Oregon wrestling tradition will carry on. "I think the other guys on the team respect us as leaders," said Besaw. Hollembaek added, "We wanna make sure the guys have something to carry on."

So Finley will be seeing his two seniors take the OSU mat, in hopes of gaining a Pac-8 individual championship, and a national championship berth.

And he, and the Oregon team, will miss Besaw and Hollembaek when they're gone.

"I'm very pleased that they have come along as far as they have," said Finley. "It shows that although a guy isn't the greatest wrestler in high school, if he works hard he can be good."

"I've been very pleased to have these guys in the program."

Wednesday, March 1, 1978

